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SLUMBER SONG FOR MARIA

By RICHARD BURDICK ELDRIDGE

Her weary head sinks down to rest,
Her eyelids flutter to a close,
Her hands lie folded on her breast,
Her thoughts are lavender and rose.

Recurrent still, though far away,
She hears as from a lofty height
The wing-beat of departing day —
The muffled pendulum of night.

And nearer now, her twilight dreams
Come crowding round her, cool and deep.
Her face a still, white lily seems;
She is so beautiful in sleep.

Before her night-bewildered eyes
Huge, violet shadows come and go
And swirl about her where she lies
Drawn by their mighty undertow.

Past endless time, beyond all space,
In bright, translucent courts of air
She walks, a miracle of grace
With silver roses in her hair.

And she should not have far to seek
To find there one who understands
The sea-shell coolness of her cheek,
The petal-lightness of her hands.

PEACE AT HOME — AT ANY PRICE

A Comedy in Two Acts

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Translated from the French by John Heard

CHARACTERS

George, *Count de Sallus*
Madeline, *his wife*
James, *Count de Randol*
A Man-Servant

Paris, in the early nineties.

ACT I

The de Sallus drawing room, elegantly furnished in the style of the day. Evening.

Mme. de Sallus *is sitting in her drawing room, reading before an open fire;* de Randol *comes in quietly, makes sure he is unobserved, and kisses her hair. She starts and turns around with an exclamation of surprise.*

Mme. de Sallus. How rash of you!

De Randol. Don't worry; no one saw me.

Mme. de Sallus. Think of the servants.

De Randol. They're in the back of the house.

Mme. de Sallus. Didn't one of them announce you?

De Randol. No. Your man merely opened the door for me.

Mme. de Sallus. What are they thinking about?

De Randol. Probably that I don't count as a guest any longer.

Mme. de Sallus. I shan't allow it. I wish them to announce you. It doesn't look well.

De Randol (*laughing*). Next thing they'll start announcing your husband!

Mme. de Sallus. Jim, such jokes are in very poor taste.

De Randol. I beg your pardon. (*Sits down.*) Are you expecting someone?

NOTE: This play was first performed at the Comédie-Francaise, in Paris, March 6, 1893. The part of de Sallus was taken by M. Worms; that of de Randol by M. Le Bargy. Mlle. Bartet impersonated Mme. de Sallus.

Although de Maupassant's works have been freely translated, this is the first and only English translation of "La Paix du Ménage."

Mme. de Sallus. Yes . . . probably. You know that I always receive when I am at home.

De Randol. I know that I never can do more than catch a glimpse of you; five minutes at most, and as soon as I've had time to ask whether you're well, along comes some other man, who, of course, is in love with you too, and who does his best to outsit me because I got here ahead of him.

Mme. de Sallus (*smiling*). What can you expect? I'm not your wife. It's all natural enough.

De Randol. If only you were my wife . . . .

Mme. de Sallus. What do you mean; if I were your wife?

De Randol. I'd take you away from this infernal city and keep you all to myself for five or six months.

Mme. de Sallus. You'd be bored in no time.

De Randol. I should not!

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, yes, you would.

De Randol. Don't you know that loving a woman as I love you makes life a hell?

Mme. de Sallus. And why, pray?

De Randol. Because I want you the way some poor starving wretch wants the pies and the pastries he sees in a foodshop window.

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, Jim! How you exaggerate!

De Randol. It's true. A woman in society belongs to society; that is, to everyone in society — except to her lover. And even her lover can only see her in public, and then only for a few minutes, and only every third day, because of gossip. Having taken endless precautions, and invented a mass of pretexts, and frightened half to death, she manages to meet him in some furnished apartment. And only once or twice a month at best. And when she does, she can only stay with him a little while because she has just come from Mrs. A's and is on her way to Mrs. B's, where she has told her carriage to call for her. If it rains, she won't come, because she can't get rid of her coachman. The coachman and the groom; Mrs. A and Mrs. B, and all the rest of the world that come in and go out of her house as if they were going to a museum — and a museum that never closes; all those people absorb her life hour by hour, minute by minute. She owes herself to them as a government employee owes his time to the State.

Just because she is a woman in society. All those people are the transparent but unbreakable window that stands between you and my love.

Mme. de Sallus. You seem on edge today.

De Randol. No, but I am half mad from longing to be with you alone. You belong to me, don't you? Or, rather, I belong to you. Well, it certainly doesn't look so! I spend my whole life in scheming to meet you. What does this love of ours amount to? A casual meeting; a greeting; a look and perhaps a handshake; nothing more. If we meet on the avenue in the morning — a bow. If we meet in some woman's house — or even in your own — half a dozen sentences, or if it's at the theatre — half as many. We may dine at the same table; generally I'm placed too far away from you to talk to you. I don't even dare look at you, lest people notice. Is that loving each other? Why, it's hardly a bowing acquaintance!

Mme. de Sallus. Would you like me to elope with you?

De Randol. That, unfortunately, is impossible.

Mme. de Sallus. Then what *do* you suggest?

De Randol. I don't know. But I do know that it's an exasperating way to live.

Mme. de Sallus. If it weren't for these difficulties, your love would have grown cold long ago.

De Randol. Madeline, how can you say such a thing!

Mme. de Sallus. Believe me, the only reason why your affection has a chance of lasting is because you have so few opportunities of expressing it.

De Randol. Upon my word! I never knew a woman so sure of herself! So, I suppose you think that if I were your husband, I'd stop caring for you?

Mme. de Sallus. Not immediately, perhaps; but quite soon.

De Randol. What a horrible thing to say!

Mme. De Sallus. No, it's so. Don't you know that when a new salesgirl is employed in a candy shop — particularly if she has a sweet tooth — the manager always tells her to eat all the candy she wants? She stuffs herself for a week until she makes herself sick. After that she never wants to touch another piece of candy as long as she lives.

De Randol. If you feel that way, why did you — er — choose me?

Mme. de Sallus. I hardly know. Perhaps because I thought you'd like me to.

De Randol. Please don't make fun of me.

Mme. de Sallus. I said to myself: Here's a poor man who seems to be very much in love with me. I'm rather at loose ends. My husband lost interest in me two years ago. So, as long as he loves me, why not?

De Randol. You're not exactly kind.

Mme. de Sallus. You're wrong; I have been kind to you. What more did you expect me to do for you?

De Randol. You poke fun at me all the time; and it exasperates me. You've been teasing me this way ever since I fell in love with you. And I haven't the faintest idea whether you care for me — even the least bit.

Mme. de Sallus. That's not fair. After all, I've given you certain very definite proofs.

De Randol. Oh, you're clever; devilishly clever, my dear! Ever since I first knew you, I've felt that you were only flirting with me. You were flirting in a vague way; mysteriously, obscurely. The way you women know how to flirt when you are trying to make yourselves fascinating — but without committing yourselves. Little by little you seduced me. Looks full of meaning; smiles; a touching of hands! But you never committed yourself; you never promised; you never took off the mask. Oh, you were clever, and you made yourself terribly desirable! It was different in my case. I loved you body and soul — deeply — loyally. Today, at this minute, I don't know how you really feel, deep down in your heart. What is going on in your head — behind that smooth brow? I don't know. I'm utterly in the dark. I think to myself: "Here is this woman who seems to have picked me out; is she in love with me or is she fundamentally bored? She's taken me as a lover — why? As an experiment? To find out? Just to taste, without being really hungry? How can I tell? Every day I wonder whether among all the men who want you — and who tell you so — there isn't someone who is coming to mean more to you than I do.

Mme. de Sallus. My dear, it is wisest not to plumb to the bottom of some wells!

De Randol. That is unkind. It is your way of saying that you do not love me.

Mme. de Sallus. Are you complaining because I don't talk freely? Surely I've proved to you — in ways which cannot be misunderstood. You can't accuse me on that ground.

De Randol. Forgive me, dear. I'm jealous, that's all.

Mme. de Sallus. Jealous of whom?

De Randol. I don't know. I'm jealous of those things in you which I don't understand.

Mme. de Sallus. Yes. And you're not grateful for what you do know of me.

De Randol. Forgive me. I love you too much; and so I'm constantly worried.

Mme. de Sallus. All the time?

De Randol. Yes; all the time, and jealous of everything and of everybody.

Mme. de Sallus. Are you jealous of my husband?

De Randol (*surprised*). Why . . . no . . . why should I be?

Mme. de Sallus. Well, you should be.

De Randol. You are laughing at me again?

Mme. de Sallus. No, I'm serious. I wanted to talk to you about it; and to ask your advice.

De Randol. About your husband?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes. And I'm not joking. That is, I'm not joking any more. (*Laughing.*) So you say you are not jealous of my husband? Strange. He is the one and only man who has any claims upon me — any rights.

De Randol. It's because he has certain rights that I'm not jealous of him. Women's hearts don't recognize men's rights.

Mme. de Sallus. My dear, a right is a positive thing. It is a vested prerogative which, to be sure, one may fail to exercise — as my husband has these last two years. But none the less it is a right which one may decide to enforce at any given moment. Just now it looks to me as if my husband was thinking of doing so.

De Randol. You mean . . . that your husband . . .?

Mme. de Sallus. Exactly.

De Randol. Why, that's impossible!

Mme. de Sallus. Why impossible?

De Randol. Because your husband . . . has . . . is . . . has other interests.

Mme. de Sallus. Apparently he enjoys a change . . . of interests.

De Randol. Tell me, Madeline, what do you mean? What's happening?

Mme. de Sallus. Oh! So now you are becoming jealous of him!

De Randol. Are you serious, or are you poking fun at me?

Mme. de Sallus. I'm in earnest; very much in earnest.

De Randol. Tell me. What is it?

Mme. de Sallus. In a general way you know my position, but I never told you all the details. Mine is a simple story. I can tell it in a very few words. When I was nineteen I married Count George de Sallus who had fallen in love with me at first sight. He happened to be a friend of my father's lawyer. In the beginning he was very sweet to me. Yes, I really think he loved me. And I was nice to him, too; very nice. There was nothing he could blame me for.

De Randol. Were you in love with him?

Mme. de Sallus. Why will you always ask such impossible questions?

De Randol. So, you were in love with him!

Mme. de Sallus. I was and I wasn't. If I was, it was in a foolish sort of way. And in any case, I never told him so. It's hard for me to be expansive.

De Randol. It certainly is!

Mme. de Sallus. How can I be sure? Maybe I did love him for a time. But only in a silly way. In a timid, very young womanish way. Timidly; awkwardly; always in dread of that nasty thing — a man's love. That nasty thing which — sometimes — can be so heavenly. As to him — you know him. A club-man; a man-about-town; yes, essentially so. When all's said and done, that kind only *stays* in love with harlots, because harlots are the club-man's women. They speak an indecent language of their own. Their caresses are degrading, degenerate, but — apparently — thrilling. That sort of man craves nakedness and obscenity.

He wants to see it, touch it, hear it. That's the only thing that will hold him. Unless — perhaps — no man can love any one woman for any length of time. In any case, it wasn't long before I realized that he had lost interest in me. He used to kiss me in a casual sort of way. He looked at me as he might look at a piece of furniture. When we were together he didn't put himself out for me, in what he did, or what he said. He was barely polite; slouched in his chair; spoke sharply; buried himself in his paper as soon as he came in; shrugged his shoulders, and when something didn't suit him, damned it — and me — up and down. Once I actually caught him yawning and stretching. That was the day I became convinced that his love for me was dead. It hurt me a good deal — so much that I wasn't clever enough to hide it — to be coquettish. I might have won him back. It wasn't long before I found out that he had a mistress. *That* one was a lady; a woman in society. We had the matter out. Very bitterly. And after that we led parallel but separate lives.

De Randol. How do you mean: you had it out?

Mme. de Sallus. Just that.

De Randol. About his mistress?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes and no. It's hard to explain. In order not to arouse my suspicions, he used . . . he thought he had to . . . from time to time . . . not very often . . . to pretend he still wanted me. To demonstrate . . . and, I may say, in a very tepid way, his devotion to his lawful wife. To his lawful wife, who had lawful claims! Well, I soon told him that such attentions were not welcome, and that even as a matter of policy he need no longer exert himself.

De Randol. Just how did you tell him so?

Mme. de Sallus. I don't remember.

De Randol. The situation was not devoid of humor!

Mme. de Sallus. No, it wasn't. At first he pretended he was surprised; but I recited a little piece, which I had carefully prepared and learned by heart. I suggested that he betake himself elsewhere to satisfy his semi-occasional desires. He understood, bowed very politely, and went his ways — for good and all.

De Randol. And he never came back?

Mme. de Sallus. Never.

De Randol. Did he never try to make love to you again?

Mme. de Sallus. No. Never.

De Randol. Are you sorry?

Mme. de Sallus. That's neither here nor there. What does matter is that he has had one mistress after another; that he's kept them and flaunted them and paraded them about. I was angry at first; and sad, and humiliated. Then I swallowed my pride and made the best of it. And afterwards — two years later — I took a lover. I took you, Jim.

De Randol. And I love you, Madeline; with all my heart.

Mme. de Sallus. But it's all rather horrid.

De Randol. How do you mean: it's horrid?

Mme. de Sallus. Life in general . . . my husband . . . his mistresses . . . you . . . and I.

De Randol. Ah, now you have told me! So, you don't love me! That proves it.

Mme. de Sallus. Why? How?

De Randol. Because you said that love "was nasty." If you were really in love, you'd know that love was *not* nasty, but something heavenly. Any woman who was really in love would be scandalized and would bitterly resent it if a man were to speak of love in that way. Making love, nasty! Please! Don't say such a thing.

Mme. de Sallus. You may be right. It all depends on how you look at life. Perhaps I look into things too deeply.

De Randol. And what do you see?

Mme. de Sallus. I see too far; too deeply; too clearly.

De Randol. Then you don't really love me?

Mme. de Sallus. If I didn't love you . . . that is, if I were not fond of you . . . just a little . . . would I have given myself to you?

De Randol. Fond of me! I suppose that in your eyes that excuses everything.

Mme. de Sallus. I know. I'm not excusing myself. I'm trying to explain — perhaps to blame myself.

De Randol. So, at that time you loved me a little, and now . . . you don't love me at all. Is that it?

Mme. de Sallus. Let's not analyse too much.

De Randol. It's you who do the analysing.

Mme. de Sallus. No. I'm looking at facts. The only time when our judgment is sound or our ideas are sensible is when we deal with the past.

De Randol. Are you sorry?

Mme. de Sallus. Perhaps — a little.

De Randol. How shall you feel tomorrow?

Mme. de Sallus. I don't know.

De Randol. Does it count for nothing that you have made a friend who is utterly devoted to you?

Mme. de Sallus. Today, yes.

De Randol. And tomorrow.

Mme. de Sallus. Today's tomorrow; I wonder about next year.

De Randol. Wait and see. So your husband is bothering you?

Mme. de Sallus. How does that concern you?

De Randol. Why, of course it does.

Mme. de Sallus. My husband shows signs of falling back in love with me.

De Randol. I can't believe it! It's impossible.

Mme. de Sallus. You needn't be insulting about it! Why shouldn't he fall in love with me?

De Randol. A man may fall in love with a woman before he marries her, but who ever heard of falling in love with your own wife?

Mme. de Sallus. Perhaps he never did love me until now.

De Randol. No. He couldn't have known you without loving you. Even if only in his casual and blunt way.

Mme. de Sallus. Well, it doesn't matter. He's either beginning to love me, or he's relapsing into it.

De Randol. I can't believe it. Tell me about it.

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, there is nothing to tell. He becomes demonstrative; kisses me; threatens me; talks about marital rights . . . . I'm worried, and I'm very much upset.

De Randol. Madeline, darling! I can't bear it!

Mme. de Sallus. And how do you think I feel? Don't you suppose I'm suffering? I know I haven't been a faithful wife, since I've given myself to you. But I'm honest, and I want to stay honest. You or him; never you *and* him. To me that is the shame, the real disgrace of unfaithful women;

it is the sharing that degrades them. A woman may fail; may fall . . . because there are ditches beside the road, and because it is not always easy to keep to the straight and narrow path. But just because one has fallen is no excuse for wallowing in the mud.

De Randol (*taking both her hands and kissing them*). I love you so very much.

Mme de Sallus (*quite simply*). And I love you, Jim; a great deal. That's why I'm afraid.

De Randol. Thank you, dear. Now, tell me: How long ago did he have this . . . relapse?

Mme. de Sallus. About two or three weeks ago, I should say.

De Randol. As recently as that?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes.

De Randol. Then I can explain it. Your husband has been recently widowed.

Mme. de Sallus. What do you mean?

De Randol. I mean that your husband is at loose ends, and that he wants to put in the spare time he has on his hands with his wife.

Mme. de Sallus. But I've just told you that he's in love with me.

De Randol. I know. I know. He is and he isn't. He's in love with you, and he's in love with another woman at the same time. Tell me, isn't he irritable, short tempered?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes, dreadfully so.

De Randol. Then here you have a man who is in love with you, but who manifests his revived love by making himself an unbearable nuisance — for he does, doesn't he?

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, he's unbearable!

De Randol. If his ardor were gentle, you would not dread it. You would say to yourself: "I have plenty of time; we shall see how matters turn." And probably you would be a little bit sorry for him. For, after all, one always feels a certain degree of pity for a man who is in love with you — even if he happens to be one's husband!

Mme. de Sallus. I suppose so.

De Randol. He's envious, and absent minded, and depressed; isn't he?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes, he is.

De Randol. And he's rather short, not to say rude to you? He takes the position of claiming a right; not of begging a favor. Am I right?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes.

De Randol. My dear, for the moment you're nothing more nor less than a stop-gap, a palliative.

Mme. de Sallus. Certainly not! What do you mean?

De Randol. My dear, Mme. de Barde was your husband's latest mistress. Some two months ago he broke with her — and very cavalierly at that — because he became infatuated with Mme. Santelli.

Mme. de Sallus. The opera singer?

De Randol. Yes. She's a flirt; very clever; very shrewd; and she has a well developed appreciation of money. Not an uncommon trait among stage people; nor, for that matter, among society folk either.

Mme. de Sallus. So, that's why he's constantly going to the Opera?

De Randol (*laughing*). Of course!

Mme. de Sallus (*thoughtfully*). No. I think you are wrong.

De Randol. The Santelli woman is being coy; is holding back, and that makes him want her all the more. His heart is filled to overflowing with passion — and he's offering you the overflow.

Mme. de Sallus. No, my dear, your diagnosis is wrong. If he were in love with Mme. Santelli, he wouldn't be telling me how much he loves me. If all his thoughts were centered in that vulgar actress, he wouldn't be trying to make love to me. If he desired her so passionately, he wouldn't be desiring me at the same time. So, you see.

De Randol. How little you know a certain type of man! When a woman has once lighted the flame of desire in a man of your husband's kind, it is like a poison. It isn't love; it's animal lust. And when the woman holds back, or eludes him, he develops something akin to rabies. He rushes along, straight ahead, blindly, with outstretched arms and hungry lips. It's a form of madness. He must love — anyone, anyone; just as your mad dog, foaming at the mouth, must bite — anyone. Mme. Santelli has driven the dog mad; you are in his path. Beware his fangs! (*After a pause.*) Do you

call that love? It's not love; it's a sort of madness.

Mme. de Sallus. You're not fair to him. You are so jealous that it makes you vindictive.

De Randol. No, I'm not wrong; you may be sure of that.

Mme. de Sallus. Nevertheless, you *are* wrong. It's true that in the past my husband was inconsiderate and did neglect me. I probably bored him. Now he finds me more attractive, and he is coming back to me. It's all very simple. Even so, it is all his own fault. If he had treated me as he should have, I should have been an honorable woman all my life.

De Randol. Madeline! How can you say such things!

Mme. de Sallus. Aren't they true?

De Randol. A woman doesn't become guilty, if she seeks comfort elsewhere when the man who has accepted the guardianship of her life, happiness, love, and hopes, fails in his undertaking. A young woman, beautiful, full of hope, full of the joy of life, can't be expected to accept perpetual isolation and neglect.

Mme. de Sallus. Dear, I've told you one must not dwell too long on certain things. This problem of mine is one of them. (*A bell rings.*) That must be my husband. Try to be pleasant to him. He's short tempered these days, and very on edge.

De Randol (*rising and about to leave*). I'd rather go. I don't feel too kindly toward your husband — for various reasons. You see, it is hard for me to be cordial to a man whom I rather despise — and who would be quite justified in despising me a great deal — especially if I kept on shaking hands with him.

Mme. de Sallus. I've told you I thought this whole situation was rather nasty.

(George de Sallus *comes in. He seems irritable. He stares at* de Randol *who is taking leave of* Mme. de Sallus. *After a pause he comes forward.*)

De Randol. Good evening, Sallus.

De Sallus. Good evening, Randol. I'm not driving you away, am I?

De Randol. Not a bit. But it's late, and I promised to meet a friend at the club at midnight. It's ten minutes to

twelve now. (*They shake hands.*) Shall I see you at the opening night of "Mahomet"?

De Sallus. Why yes. I expect to be there.

De Randol. The advance notices are excellent.

De Sallus. So I understand.

De Randol (*again shaking hands*). Au revoir.

De Sallus. Au revoir.

De Randol (*to* Mme. de Sallus). Good night.

Mme. de Sallus. Good night.

(De Randol *exit.*)

De Sallus (*dropping into an armchair*). Has he been here long?

Mme. de Sallus. Not very. Perhaps half an hour.

De Sallus. Half an hour at the end of an hour makes an hour and a half. Time goes fast when you and Jim are together.

Mme de Sallus. What do you mean — an hour and a half?

De Sallus. Just that. I noticed a carriage in front of the door, so I asked the groom who was calling on you, and he said it was de Randol. I inquired whether he'd been here long, and the man said he'd come at ten. Hence, assuming that the groom was a quarter of an hour off on his reckoning — and giving you the benefit of the mistake — it adds up to an hour and forty minutes, at the very least.

Mme. de Sallus. Are you crazy? Are you suggesting that I'm no longer at liberty to receive such callers as I see fit to?

De Sallus. My dear! Far be it from me to restrict your activities in any way. Not in *any, any, any* way! All I meant was that I didn't understand how you could think that an hour and a half call had only lasted half an hour. That's all, my dear.

Mme. de Sallus. Are you trying to make an issue of it? If you are looking for a quarrel, say so. I'm quite ready for one. But if you're only upset and on edge, why not go to bed and sleep it off — if you can.

De Sallus. I'm not looking for a quarrel, and I'm not on edge. I merely call your attention to the fact that when you and Jim de Randol are together, time has a way of flying past *very* fast.

Mme. de Sallus. It does slip by quickly. Very much more quickly than it does when I am with you.

De Sallus. Jim is a charming fellow, and I quite understand why you like him. And — if I may say so — he seems to be pretty fond of you. I notice that he comes to see you nearly every day.

Mme. de Sallus. Look here, George, I don't care for that sort of badgering hostility. Be so good as to explain dogmatically and clearly just what you object to. If you are jealous, say so. We can have it out and go on to the next thing.

De Sallus. Why, my dear, you don't understand! I trust you implicitly. I have the deepest respect for you! Not for a moment would I reproach you in any way. And I am convinced that you are too shrewd ever to expose yourself to gossip or slander — regardless of how justifiable it might be.

Mme. de Sallus. Why bandy words? You think that Jim de Randol comes to the house too often — that is, to your house. Is that it?

De Sallus. My dear, far be it from me ever to criticize anything you do!

Mme. de Sallus. And there is no reason why you should. But as long as you've brought the matter up, let it be settled once and for all. I don't like insinuations.

As I cannot help noticing, your memory is not very good. I think I'd better help you. Be honest. Just why I don't know, but obviously you feel very differently about certain matters than you did two years ago. Shall we take a look at those last two years? It might make things clearer. When you began to ignore my very existence, I was distressed. It wasn't long before I found out — someone told me — that you were in love with Mme. de Servières . . . I made clear to you how hurt I was and how unhappy . . . I was jealous. And how did you answer me? Just as all men answer a woman whom they no longer love, when she reproaches them. You shrugged your shoulders; you gave me an impatient smile; you mumbled that I was crazy. You went on to explain as delicately as you could — I give you credit to that extent — the theories practiced by every husband who wishes to have a mistress, while expecting his wife to be faithful. You gave me to understand that marriage was not a bond, but a sort of

pooling of interests, a social rather than a moral relationship, which does not require love or affection as between husband and wife. The only requisite was the avoidance of all scandal. To be sure, you did not admit to me that you actually had a mistress. You spoke of extenuating circumstances. You rather scathingly commented on wives who, foolishly, objected to their husbands' having affairs, because having affairs was an essential part of polite society. You pointed out that, of course, you belonged to that society. You made fun of the husband who didn't dare pay a compliment to a woman in his wife's presence. And you scoffed at a wife who keeps her eye constantly on her husband, and imagined that whenever he went into the next room, he was falling on his knees before some other woman. You made it all sound clever and amusing — and rather pathetic. You glossed your meaning over with pretty compliments and seasoned it with a sort of cruelty which must inevitably kill any love for a man who was so delicate, so polished, and so false that he could talk to his wife in such a way.

Oh, I understood. I cried my eyes out and I was very unhappy. I locked my bedroom door. You made no demands upon me. You merely decided that I was more sensible than you had thought me. And we led our lives wholly along separate lines. That was two years ago. Two years that have been painfully long for me, but, I imagine, seemed like six months to you. We go out together and we come home together, and then we each go to our respective rooms.

The whole situation is your fault, and was due to your first lapse. Heaven knows, that was only the first of many! I didn't mention the matter; I accepted it as a fact. But I eliminated you from my heart. I don't love you; it's over, past, dead. What are you asking for?

De Sallus. I'm not asking anything of you. And I don't propose to answer the rather violent diatribe I've listened to. I am going to give you a bit of friendly advice — as of one friend to another. You are seriously endangering your reputation. You are lovely; you're very much in the public eye. You might easily be accused of indiscretions . . . of having your name linked with that of . . .

Mme. de Sallus. If you want to talk of affairs, let's balance the books and see how we stand.

De Sallus. Oh, come, I'm not joking. I'm talking to you as a friend — as a real friend. I need hardly say that your accusations are grossly exaggerated.

Mme. de Sallus. They are not. You've boasted of your mistresses. You have aired your affairs so that he who runs may read. And that amounts to giving me permission to do likewise. Don't worry, my dear; I'm looking around.

De Sallus. I object!

Mme. de Sallus. Let me finish. I, too, have something to say. You tell me I am beautiful; and I'm still young. Why should you have the right to sentence me to a premature widowhood? Look at me! (*She walks across the room.*) Is there any reason why I should lead an Ariadne-sort of existence; while my husband flits from one woman to another, and from one harlot's bed to the next? (*She becomes more and more angry.*) You talk of faithfulness! Yes, you have! So you expect a woman to sacrifice her whole life, her happiness, her capacity to love, in fact to give up all that fundamentally makes us women? Look at me! Do you think I was intended to live out my life in a convent? The very fact that I married a man should prove to you that I didn't wish to be a nun. Yes, you, my husband, took me; and now you abandon me and spend your time running after other women! And what women! I'm not that sort! I won't share a man! So much the worse for you! You've made your choice. I'm free; you've given me my freedom, and you have no right to give me even advice! I tell you, I'm free to do as I like.

De Sallus. Please, my dear, don't get excited. You've misunderstood the situation from beginning to end. I've never suspected your integrity. Never! I'm very fond of you. My affection for you is very strong, very deep. And it grows stronger every day. I'd rather not discuss the bygones of which you accuse me so bitterly. Perhaps I have been . . . too . . . how shall I put it . . . ?

Mme. de Sallus. Say you were born too late . . . that your morals are those you inherited from the previous generation. It's a good excuse! I know it by heart. And it's supposed to explain away all your so-called weaknesses and foibles and lapses. Yes, that good old eighteenth century! The Century of Fashion! Don't tell me how elegant

it was, how gracious! Don't remind me of its sweet ways, of its fascinating caprices. No, no, no! The tune is too old; the excuse too threadbare!

De Sallus. You're wrong again. I am, or rather I was, too much of a bachelor — too much a man-about-town. Stage doors; clubs; night-life. Then I married. You can't change overnight. It takes time. To a man like me, marriage is a terrific upheaval, and a very sudden one. It takes time to become accustomed to the change of diet. And then, just as I was becoming adjusted to it, you cut off my rations entirely.

Mme. de Sallus. Thank you for explaining. Are you asking me to give you another trial? To begin all over again?

De Sallus. I'm only too ready when you say the word. You know, when a man who has lived as I have marries, he's bound to think of his wife as if she were a new mistress — one he can count on to be faithful to him. Then, by and by — much later, you begin to see the difference, to appreciate it — and to regret your mistake.

Mme. de Sallus. That may be all true, my dear. But it's too late now. I've told you I was looking around. It has taken me two years to make up my mind, and, you'll grant me, that is a long time. At least, I've found it so. I want a very nice man; much nicer than you. You don't seem to realize that I'm paying you a compliment!

De Sallus. Such remarks, Madeline, strike me as in very poor taste.

Mme. de Sallus. Why so? I take it for granted that all your various mistresses must have been more charming than I am. Otherwise why should you have chosen them?

De Sallus. What's the matter with you? Why do you have to be so disagreeable?

Mme. de Sallus. No, my dear, it isn't I who is different or disagreeable. It is you.

De Sallus. You're right. I am different.

Mme. de Sallus. And what am I to infer from that?

De Sallus. That I've been a fool.

Mme. de Sallus. Well? And what of it?

De Sallus. That I've come to my senses.

Mme. de Sallus. Yes?

De Sallus. That I'm in love with my wife, that's all.

Mme. de Sallus. You mean that you're hungry.

De Sallus. What?

Mme. de Sallus. I said: that you are hungry.

De Sallus. What do you mean?

Mme. de Sallus. I mean that when a man's supplies are cut off, he gets hungry. And when a man is really hungry he will gladly eat food that, on other occasions, he would scorn. Oh, my dear, I understand. I'm the dish which in good times you wouldn't touch. Now that times are hard, it seems quite appetizing. Thank you so much; but I must decline!

De Sallus. I've never seen you like this before. Your attitude is surprising — and not a pleasant one.

Mme. de Sallus. So much the worse for both of us. You say I surprise you; well, you disgust me. Once and for all, get it into your head that I don't care to be a stop-gap — a snack between meals.

De Sallus (*takes her hand and kisses it — long and tenderly*). Madeline, darling; I give you my word that I am in love with you — very deeply — now and forever.

Mme. de Sallus. I'll grant that you may think so. By the way, who's the woman who, at the moment, will have none of you?

De Sallus. Madeline, I swear . . .

Mme. de Sallus. I wouldn't perjure myself, if I were you. I'm morally certain that you have broken with your latest mistress, and that you want another one. I know; you've been looking around, and you haven't found what you want. So, you come to me. For three years you have neglected me so completely that now I'm a new woman to you. You're not coming back to your wife; you're coming back to a mistress with whom you have parted; and now you want to take her back. When you analyze it, you're promiscuous; that's all.

De Sallus. I'm not concerned with whether you are my wife, or merely a woman. You are the person whom I love and whom I want. I dream about you; wherever I go, I see you just ahead of me — just out of reach; and I want you, want you, want you — every minute of the day and night. You happen to be my wife. I don't know whether that is an

advantage or a disadvantage; and what is more: I don't care!

Mme. de Sallus. Do you appreciate what an alluring opportunity you are offering me? Minnie, Maud, and Mabel have kissed you good-bye, and now you expect me, your wife, the Countess de Sallus, to fill the gap and to be her husband's mistress — *pro tem.*

De Sallus. Not *pro tem;* for good and all.

Mme. de Sallus. Just a minute, please! You are asking me to believe that you want me to become your permanent wife again. That is aside from the point, since I haven't been your wife for a long time. You may think that I am splitting hairs. It may be a fine distinction, but it is a very valid one. I quite appreciate that the idea of making me into a legitimate mistress is much more fascinating than merely coming back to your lawful spouse.

De Sallus. And why shouldn't a woman become her husband's mistress? I see your point of view. You are free — wholly free. And this freedom is yours because my behavior made you so. I happen to be in love with you, and so I say to you: "Madeline, my dear, you're not in love with anyone else, and I love you. Won't you be kind to me?"

Mme. de Sallus. I see. You claim a prior lien, because you are my husband.

De Sallus. If you will.

Mme. de Sallus. But you admit that I am free?

De Sallus. Certainly.

Mme. de Sallus. And you want me to be your mistress?

De Sallus. Very much.

Mme. de Sallus. Is it clearly understood? Your mistress?

De Sallus. Yes.

Mme. de Sallus. Well, I was about to make another connection, but as perhaps you have a prior claim, I will sign with you — on the same terms.

De Sallus. What do you mean: The same terms?

Mme. de Sallus. I'll explain. Am I as attractive as your — what shall I say — play-girls? You might as well be honest.

De Sallus. Much more attractive.

Mme. de Sallus. Are you sure?

De Sallus. Positive.

Mme. de Sallus. Am I more attractive than the *most* attractive one?

De Sallus. Much more.

Mme. de Sallus. Well, then, tell me how much the most attractive of your mistresses cost you — say for three months.

De Sallus. I have no idea.

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, yes, you have. Tell me: How much did that most attractive of all your mistresses cost you for three months? I mean money, jewels, dinners, suppers, theater tickets, and everything. In other words, what did it cost you to keep her?

De Sallus. How can I tell?

Mme. de Sallus. But you must know. Think back. Did you give her a lump sum, or did you pay her individual bills? Probably a lump sum, because I know how details bore you.

De Sallus. Really, Madeline; you're impossible!

Mme. de Sallus. Now listen; just a minute. When you began to neglect me, you eliminated three horses from our stable — one of mine and two of yours. And you gave up one coachman and one groom. After all, you had to cut internal expenses to balance the new outside costs.

De Sallus. No, I didn't!

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, yes, you did! And if you want, I can give you the exact dates. I wouldn't try to deny it, if I were you, because I'd only make you out a liar. And it was just about that time that you stopped giving me jewels. Oh, I understand! There were other fingers and wrists and bosoms that you had to adorn! Next, you gave up our box at the opera on one of our two evenings a week. There were lots of other little things; I don't remember exactly. If my figures are correct, it must total up to about five thousand francs a month. Am I right?

De Sallus. You are perfectly crazy.

Mme. de Sallus. No, I'm not. You might as well admit that your most expensive woman cost you about five thousand francs a month. Isn't that so?

De Sallus. I repeat that you're perfectly crazy.

Mme. de Sallus. If you feel that way about it, I'll say good-night.

(*She starts to leave the room; he detains her.*)

De Sallus. Come. Please stop joking.

Mme. de Sallus. Five thousand francs! Tell me: Didn't she cost you five thousand a month?

De Sallus. Well, perhaps. Something like that.

Mme. de Sallus. Very well, my dear, give me five thousand francs, and I'll give you a month's lease here and now.

De Sallus. Why, you're perfectly insane!

Mme. de Sallus. Very well. Good-night, and sweet dreams.

De Sallus. Don't be silly. Sit down, Madeline, and we'll talk sensibly.

Mme. de Sallus. What about?

De Sallus. Why, of . . . of . . . of how much I love you.

Mme. de Sallus. It doesn't run very deep, that love of yours.

De Sallus. It does; and I swear it.

Mme. de Sallus. Don't be silly. You've made me talk so much that I'm thirsty. (*She pours herself a glass of water. As she is about to drink, her husband tiptoes up behind her and kisses her neck. She whirls around and throws her glass of water full in his face.*)

De Sallus. That's not funny!

Mme. de Sallus. Perhaps. But what you did, or tried to do, was ridiculous.

De Sallus. Madeline. Come, now!

Mme. de Sallus. Five thousand francs.

De Sallus. I'd be an idiot if I paid you.

Mme. de Sallus. And why?

De Sallus. Why? Because a man would be an idiot to pay his lawful wife. After all, I have the right . . .

Mme. de Sallus. Not the right, but the power. And if you do . . . I . . . shall take my revenge. . . .

De Sallus. Madeline!

Mme. de Sallus. Five thousand.

De Sallus. It would be ridiculous for me to give my own wife money — to pay her. Not only ridiculous, but stupid.

Mme. de Sallus. It's much stupider when you have a wife, and as attractive a one as I am, to spend your money on whores.

De Sallus. That's true. But I didn't marry you to have you bankrupt me.

Mme. de Sallus. Just a minute. When you spend money — your money, which is also my money — on some woman, it's a clear case of dishonesty, almost of theft. You are bankrupting me as well as yourself. That was the way you put it. Remember? I was considerate enough not to ask for more than your harlot did. But this is the difference: The five thousand francs you give me stay in the family, right here in your own household. You ought to consider that as a great saving. There's another side to it. I know you. You could never love anything that was perfectly straight and lawful. In paying me a high price — and it may prove even more expensive, because I shall probably ask for a raise — in paying me, I say, for what you are legally entitled to, you'll find our . . . affair . . . all the more attractive. And now, George, I'll say good-night. I'm going to bed.

De Sallus (*cynically*). Must it be cash — or will you take a cheque?

Mme. de Sallus. Cash, please.

De Sallus (*looking into his wallet*). I only have three thousand on me in cash. I'll draw a cheque for the balance. (*He draws a cheque and hands it, with the bank notes, to his wife.*)

Mme. de Sallus (*takes it. Looks at him scornfully; in a hard, bitter voice*). You are exactly the sort of man I thought you. You've paid your whores, and now, when I make demands on you, just as they did, you pay up without even quibbling. I know you found it expensive, and — rather humiliating. But what you overlooked in your appraisal was that I, your wife, was selling herself to you. You wanted me — in a vague sort of way — as a change from your prostitutes. And I was willing to degrade myself to their level. That didn't put you off at all; in fact it made you all the more eager. Perhaps because I had degraded myself even more than they, you wanted me all the more.

Well, my dear! You were wrong. That is hardly the way

to win me. And so, good-night. (*She throws his money in his face.*)

ACT II.

Same setting as in Act I. A few days have passed. Mme. de Sallus *is at her desk. She glances at a clock.*

Servant (*announcing*). Count de Randol.

De Randol (*after bowing and kissing her hand*). I hope I find you well?

Mme. de Sallus. Reasonably so, thank you.

(*Exit* Servant.)

De Randol. What has happened? Your letter gave me a shock. I thought you must have had an accident, so I came as quickly as I could.

Mme. de Sallus. The fact is, Jim, that the situation is very serious. You and I must make a tremendously important decision.

De Randol. Explain yourself.

Mme. de Sallus. The last two days have been agonizing. No woman could suffer more than I have.

De Randol. What happened?

Mme. de Sallus. I'll tell you; and I'll try to be calm and clear. I don't want you to think I am crazy. I can't go on living this way . . . and so I sent for you.

De Randol. You know how devoted I am to you, and that you can count on me absolutely. What can I do?

Mme. de Sallus. I can't stand living with him any longer. It's impossible! I can't! He tortures me.

De Randol. Your husband?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes.

De Randol. What has he done to you?

Mme. de Sallus. We shall have to go back to the other day when you were here. After you left, when he and I were alone together, he made a scene. Jealousy. On your account.

De Randol. Jealous of me?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes. And in the course of the scene he made it clear that he had been spying on us.

De Randol. How so?

Mme. de Sallus. He had asked questions of the servants.

De Randol. Is that all?

Mme. de Sallus. No. But it doesn't matter, anyway. He is really very fond of you. He started by telling me how much he was in love with me; how much he wanted me. I was rather insulting — perhaps too insulting, too scornful. I'm not sure. Anyway, the situation was so impossible that I gambled everything on the chance of escaping from it.

De Randol. What did you do?

Mme. de Sallus. I tried to wound him so deeply that he'd leave me alone for good and all.

De Randol. And you failed?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes. I failed.

De Randol. It never works. It generally makes them all the more insistent.

Mme. de Sallus. Next day at lunch he seemed nervous, surly, and mean. As he left the table he said: "I shan't forget your performance of last night; and I shan't let you forget it, either. You declared war on me, and war you shall have. But I warn you that I shall beat you down. I'm master in my own house." I answered that it might all be true, but I told him that if he pushed me too far, he'd better look out. There are limits. Some things a woman won't stand.

De Randol. Yes; it is bad policy to take that line with one's wife. What did he say to that?

Mme. de Sallus. He didn't answer. He brutalized me.

De Randol. Did he actually strike you?

Mme. de Sallus. He did and he didn't. He seized me; tried to kiss me and bruised me. My arms are black and blue from my elbows up. No, he did not actually strike me.

De Randol. And after that?

Mme. de Sallus. He tried to overcome my resistance by kissing me.

De Randol. Is that all?

Mme. de Sallus. What do you mean, is that all? Isn't that enough? You . . . You . . . !

De Randol. That's not what I meant. I wanted to find out whether he had struck you, beaten you.

Mme. de Sallus. No. But that's not what I'm afraid of. Luckily I was able to get to the bell.

De Randol. Did you really ring it?

Mme. de Sallus. I did.

De Randol. What in the world did you say when the butler came? Did you tell him to show your husband out?

Mme. de Sallus. I suppose the whole thing strikes you as humorous!

De Randol. No, my dear; I'm very distressed. Even so, I can't help thinking that the picture you paint is — what shall I say? — very unusual. I'm sorry! Then what happened?

Mme. de Sallus. I ordered my carriage. Then, as soon as the servant had left the room, he said with that nasty arrogance of his — you know the look: "If it isn't today, it will be tomorrow. What do I care?"

De Randol. And then?

Mme. de Sallus. That's about all.

De Randol. Nothing more?

Mme. de Sallus. Only that I lock myself into my room as soon as I hear him come into the house at night.

De Randol. You haven't seen him since?

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, yes. Several times; but only for a few seconds.

De Randol. Did he have anything to say?

Mme. de Sallus. Not much. He laughed unpleasantly and asked, rather insultingly, whether I was any more amenable than I was the day before. Then, last evening, at dinner, he brought a book to the table and started reading. As I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of letting him think I was annoyed, I said: "Your manners become more courteous to me every day." And he answered: "My manners?" "Yes," I said, "you seem to choose the times when we are alone together to do your reading." "Why not, my dear?" he replied. "Isn't it rather your fault? You refuse me all other privileges. By the way, this is a particularly entertaining book; it is a treatise on the law governing conjugal relations and rights. Do you mind if I read you a few excerpts? I'm sure you will find them of interest." Then

he read me the law covering marriage — the duties of the wife, and the rights of the husband. After that he looked me squarely in the face, and asked whether I understood it all. I took my cue from him, and answered back in the same tone: "Yes, I understand the law thoroughly. And I have also come to understand exactly what sort of man I've married." Then I left the table, and I haven't seen him since.

De Randol. You haven't seen him at all today?

Mme. de Sallus. No. He lunched out. I thought things over, and I decided not to see him again.

De Randol. Are you sure he wasn't simply angry? Your attitude annoyed him; it ruffled his vanity, and hurt his pride, perhaps. It was natural for him to bluster. I have an idea that you will find him in a very pleasant mood when he comes home. You know, he was at the opera last night, and Mme. Santelli scored a true sensation in "Mahomet." I rather think she invited him to supper afterwards. So, if things turned out as he wanted them to, the chances are that he will be in a very good state of mind.

Mme. de Sallus. You're exasperating! Can't you grasp the fact that I am in that man's power; that I am his thing; that he owns and controls me even more than his manservant, or even his dog? Don't you realize that he has the power to exercise certain loathsome rights over me? The law, the law that you uncivilized men have written — your law hands me over to him; that I have no rights, no redress, no escape — except suicide? Think of it! Think of the horrible demands he can — legally — make on me! He can do anything he wants with me — short of killing me. And he has the legal power and the police force to enforce his demands. And I can do absolutely nothing. There's no way I can escape from a man whom I hate and despise. That's your law! The law you men made. He married me; he took me, and he dropped me. All I have is the personal and moral right to hate him. And I do! But what good is it to hate my husband? He's scorned me; he's been unfaithful; to my certain knowledge he's flitted from one woman to another; out of one whore's bed into the next. And yet that husband — whom I have the lawful right to hate and despise — can still legally exact from me a loathsome submission to his desire. I can't even hide, since I am not allowed to have

a key to my bedroom door. They're all his; his property; the key, the door, and the woman! Oh, the horror of it! The shame of it! No longer to own oneself! Not to have the right to protect one's body from such filthy and degrading contacts! Have you men ever conceived or written a more iniquitous law?

De Randol. I know, my very dear, what misery you're going through. Unfortunately there's no way out. Not even the law and the courts can help you.

Mme. de Sallus. I know it. But even if you have no father or mother to turn to; even if the law and the police are against you, there is still one way of escaping. I don't have to accept — as so many women do — a loathsome relationship. No, there's a way out.

De Randol. How?

Mme. de Sallus. I'll leave his house.

De Randol. What do you mean?

Mme. de Sallus. I mean that I am going to run away.

De Randol. Alone?

Mme. de Sallus. No. With you.

De Randol. With me? Do you know what that means?

Mme. de Sallus. Yes. And the worse the consequences, the better. If the scandal is bad enough, he can't take me back. I can face it. He's forced the disgrace on me. Well then, I'll make it complete! I'll make it a nine days' wonder! So much the worse for him — and for me!

De Randol. Steady now! You're in one of those emotional states of mind that lead people to make mistakes which can't be corrected.

Mme. de Sallus. I'd rather do something that will ruin me — that's what people call it, I think. I'd rather be ruined than, day after day, have to fight against defilement.

De Randol. Now, Madeline; listen to me. I know you're in a desperately difficult predicament. Don't jump out of the frying pan into the fire.

Mme. de Sallus. Well, what do you suggest?

De Randol. I don't know. We must think — see what develops. But I cannot advise you to do something that will put you outside the pale, not only of the law, but of society.

Mme. de Sallus. Yes, I know! That pale that allows a

woman to have all the lovers she wants, provided she does so discreetly — and isn't officially caught!

De Randol. That isn't the point. You've broken with your husband, haven't you? Very well; let's see to it that you were justified in doing so. Have you made up your mind to leave him?

Mme. de Sallus. I have.

De Randol. Absolutely and irrevocably?

Mme. de Sallus. My mind's made up.

De Randol. And you won't change it?

Mme. de Sallus. Positively not.

De Randol. All right. But why not play the game shrewdly; why not be clever? You might as well save your good name. Don't make a noisy scandal. Wait. Your chance will come.

Mme. de Sallus. And I suppose you'll suggest next that I welcome him with open arms when he comes in! That I should be nice to him and let him do anything he wants to!

De Randol. Please, Madeline! I'm trying to be your friend; to give you good advice.

Mme. de Sallus. Yes, I know! The cautious friend. The friend that plays safe.

De Randol. The friend who is too fond of you to see you make a mistake without protesting!

Mme. de Sallus. But just cautious enough to advise a disgraceful compromise — which commits him to nothing.

De Randol. You're wrong! All wrong. There's nothing in the world I'd rather do than live with you. But why not get your divorce first? Then, if you will, I'll gladly marry you.

Mme. de Sallus. That means waiting two years. Is your love that durable?

De Randol. Look at the alternative. If we run away together, your husband will immediately take you out of my house; will have you put in jail, and so will make it impossible for you to become my wife — ever.

Mme. de Sallus. But we don't have to go to your house, do we? There are plenty of other places where we could hide. He'd never find us.

De Randol. Yes, we could hide — but that means hiding for the rest of our lives. It means living under an as-

sumed name — or abroad — or hidden away in the country. Love, yes; but love in jail! You'd hate me at the end of three months. No, my dear, I could never let you make such a mistake.

Mme. de Sallus. I thought you loved me enough to take that risk — to make that mistake — with me. I see I was wrong. So, good-bye.

De Randol. Madeline — please — listen . . .

Mme. de Sallus. Jim, it's for you to choose. Take me or lose me. Now or never. Choose.

De Randol. Madeline, I beg you . . .

Mme. de Sallus. You've made your choice. That settles it. Good-bye. (*She moves toward the door.*)

De Randol. You must listen to me.

Mme. de Sallus. I won't. Good-bye. (*He takes her in his arms; she struggles irritatedly.*) Let go! Let me alone! If you don't, I'll ring.

De Randol. Go ahead and ring, but listen to me first. I don't propose that some fine day you'll be in a position to blame me for the insane move you suggest making now. I don't want you to come to hate me. I don't want you, when you have tied yourself to me by an elopement, to blame me bitterly for having let you take the step . . .

Mme. de Sallus. Let me go — I despise you — let me go!

De Randol. Very well; if you feel that way, let's go away together.

Mme. de Sallus. Oh no! Not now! It's too late. I know the kind of man you are. Let me go!

De Randol. I did what I thought I ought to do. I've said what I thought was right to say. My responsibility, as far as you are concerned, is over, and you no longer have the right to reproach me. Now, if you wish, I am ready to go away with you.

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, no! You are too late. I don't propose to be put in the position of accepting sacrifices.

De Randol. It isn't a question of making sacrifices. You know that there's nothing I'd rather do than go away with you.

Mme. de Sallus (*surprised*). I don't understand. Are you crazy?

De Randol. No, I'm not crazy. It's perfectly natural. I'm in love with you. Don't you see?

Mme. de Sallus. No, I don't see. Just what *do* you mean?

De Randol. How can I explain? I love you. That's all there is to say. So, shall we go?

Mme. de Sallus. And only a few minutes ago you were very chary of the idea of taking such a risk.

De Randol. You don't — or won't — understand me, my dear. So please listen to me. When I first realized that I was in love with you, I took a solemn oath. When a man becomes the lover of a woman situated as you are — that is, married, but discarded, legally a slave, although morally free — she creates a bond between them that she, and she only, can break. The woman has taken all the risks. And she knows it. She gives everything — her love, her body, her soul. And she gambles her honor and her life against dangers, disgrace, every sort of catastrophe. And she does it because she is willing to be rash — she wants to risk everything. Because she accepts the chance of her husband's killing her; because she is prepared to have the world ostracize her, that is what makes her marital infidelity beautiful. And that is why, when her lover accepts her, he must have foreseen all contingencies, and must, because he loves her more than anything, be ready to accept all the results which may occur. I've said all I have to say. I spoke first in terms of wisdom — to warn you. Then I spoke as the man who loves you. It is now for you to tell me what you want me to do.

Mme. de Sallus. A pretty speech, and quite convincing — if true.

De Randol. It *is* true.

Mme. de Sallus. You'd really like to run away with me?

De Randol. I would.

Mme. de Sallus. Honestly? Truthfully?

De Randol. Honestly and truthfully.

Mme. de Sallus. Today?

De Randol. Whenever you say the word.

Mme. de Sallus. Let me see. It is seven forty-five. I

expect my husband at any minute. We dine at eight. I shall be free by nine-thirty — certainly by ten.

De Randol. Where shall I meet you?

Mme. de Sallus. Meet me at the end of this block. Wait for me in a cab. (*A bell rings.*) There he is now. Thank God, it's the last time I shall hear him come in.

(De Sallus *enters.*)

De Sallus (*to* de Randol *who is about to leave*). Come, now! Are you running off again? It seems that as soon as I show my face, you jump up to go.

De Randol. That's not quite so, old man. You're not driving me off. I was just leaving.

De Sallus. That's what I'm saying. The minute I get home, you leave. I appreciate that the husband isn't as attractive as the wife. But, please, don't make the husband feel that you dislike him. (*Laughs.*)

De Randol. Don't be foolish! You know I'm very fond of you, and if you would only cultivate the excellent habit of coming into your own house without ringing bells, you'd never find me on my feet and ready to leave.

De Sallus. Well — after all, it's fairly usual to ring door-bells — even one's own.

De Randol. Granted, but the sound of a bell always makes me get up. It would be nice if you didn't frighten me by ringing your own door-bell. How about it?

De Sallus. I can't say I quite follow you.

De Randol. It's simple enough. When I go to see people whom I really like — for instance, you and your wife — I don't enjoy running into every Tom, Dick, and Harry — you know — the kind that spend their afternoons drifting from one drawing room to another, dropping the same allegedly clever platitudes in each. Personally they bore me, and it's enough for one of that kind — man or woman — to come into a room to spoil all the pleasure I might have had talking to the lady I really came to see. The funny thing is that if I get myself caught while I'm still sitting down, I'm done for. I can't seem to get away; I get sucked into the conversation. I know it all by heart — in fact far better than I know my catechism — and I go on and on. I seem to be obliged to stay on until the last person has made the last comment on whatever play, or novel, or engagement, or

divorce, or death happens to be on the docket. That's why I jump up as soon as I hear a door-bell ring.

De Sallus (*laughing*). You're perfectly right. Our houses are impossible from four to seven. Our wives have no business to complain if we take refuge in the club.

Mme. de Sallus. And yet I certainly can't invite your clever girls, musical comedy stars, and would-be painters, poets, musicians, and so-called artists, just to keep you at home.

De Sallus. Not a bit of it! All I ask for is a few clever men and a few beautiful women. And not a crowd.

Mme. de Sallus. It can't be done. You can't be at home to some people and not to others.

De Sallus. Why not?

Mme. de Sallus. Well, because that's what society is.

De Sallus. I wish it were not. I'd so much prefer a hand-picked group — personal — intimately your own.

Mme. de Sallus. What, you?

De Sallus. Absolutely.

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, dear! I can imagine your group. I can see what sort of ladies and gentlemen would belong to it. — And I can see how quickly I should leave the house.

De Sallus. I'd only ask for three or four women just like you.

Mme. de Sallus. What?

De Sallus. Three or four women like you.

Mme. de Sallus. If you need four of them, no wonder you've found the house lonely.

De Sallus. You know quite well what I mean, and I don't have to explain. I'm perfectly happy when I can be at home with you — alone.

Mme. de Sallus. I hardly recognize you! Are you feeling ill? You must be — very ill!

De Sallus. Joke all you want to. You can't make me angry.

Mme. de Sallus. And how long will this mood of yours last?

De Sallus. Forever.

Mme. de Sallus. Men change their minds, you know.

De Sallus. Look here, Jim, will you do me a favor?

Stay for dinner. That might save me from some of these sarcastic remarks my wife is tossing in my direction.

De Randol. Thank you. It's very kind of you, but I have another engagement.

De Sallus. Well, break it.

De Randol. I wish I could, but I really can't.

De Sallus. Are you dining out?

De Randol. Yes . . . not exactly . . . I have an appointment for nine o'clock.

De Sallus. Is it important?

De Randol. Very.

De Sallus. I see. A woman.

De Randol. Come!

De Sallus. That's all right. Be as discreet as you want. But that doesn't prevent you from staying for dinner.

De Randol. I'm sorry. I can't.

De Sallus. You can go immediately afterwards.

De Randol. But I'm not dressed.

De Sallus. I'll send my man for your clothes.

De Randol. No . . . really . . . I can't.

De Sallus (*to his wife*). My dear, see if you can't persuade him to stay.

Mme. de Sallus. To be quite frank, I don't much care whether he stays or not.

De Sallus. You're in a sweet mood, aren't you! And you make no distinctions, either.

Mme. de Sallus. I'm not anxious to insist on my friends staying for dinner just to please you and keep you at home. Ask your own friends.

De Sallus. As I plan to stay in anyway, the only difference is that you and I will spend the evening alone together.

Mme. de Sallus. Do you really intend to stay in?

De Sallus. I do.

Mme. de Sallus. The whole evening?

De Sallus. Yes, the whole evening.

Mme. de Sallus (*sarcastically*). Oh, dear, dear! How you frighten me! And may I ask to what I owe such an attention from you?

De Sallus. Merely because I want the pleasure of spending an evening with you.

Mme. de Sallus. You really seem to be in an excellent frame of mind.

De Sallus. Well, if you feel that way, why don't you ask Jim to stay?

Mme. de Sallus. He'll do just as he wishes. He knows I always enjoy seeing him. (*She gets up, walks across the room, and, after a moment's thought*). I hope you *will* stay to dinner, Jim. You can run away as soon as dinner is over, if you wish.

De Randol. In that case, I shall be delighted.

Mme. de Sallus. Will you gentlemen excuse me for a minute. It is eight o'clock, and dinner will be announced immediately.

(*Exit.*)

De Sallus. Look here, Jim. You would do me a great favor if you stayed all the evening.

De Randol. Sorry, old man; I really cannot.

De Sallus. Is it really impossible?

De Randol. Absolutely. I simply can't stay.

De Sallus. Really?

De Randol. I'm sorry.

De Sallus. It makes it rather awkward for me.

De Randol. Why?

De Sallus. Oh, personal reasons. I . . . er . . . want to make it up with my wife.

De Randol. Have you two fallen out?

De Sallus. More or less. You must have noticed.

De Randol. Who's to blame? You or she?

De Sallus. Oh, it's my fault.

De Randol. The devil you say!

De Sallus. Yes; things weren't going right; that is, certain outside interests that meant a good deal to me. It all upset me, and I was disagreeable and snappy to her.

De Randol. I can't see how a third person can help smooth out that sort of thing.

De Sallus. By staying, she'll understand — and without irritating or offending her — that . . . well . . . that I've changed my mind.

De Randol. Oh! So you'd like to patch things up?

De Sallus. No . . . not exactly . . . in fact, rather the reverse . . .

De Randol. Wait a minute. I don't quite follow you.

De Sallus. I'll tell you. What I'd like to do is to re-establish and maintain a *status quo* of, shall we say, impersonal neutrality. A sort of platonic peace. (*Laughs.*) All these details must bore you; they're no concern of yours!

De Randol. Now, hold on. If I'm to take some sort of part in all this, I might as well know just what I'm supposed to do.

De Sallus. Why, you are to be the go-between, the moderator, the conciliator!

De Randol. Your idea is a sort of peace which guarantees you certain privileges — the right to go your own way as you choose?

De Sallus. Exactly!

De Randol. What you mean is that now that those outside troubles which you mentioned have been settled, you want — as far as your home is concerned — to be allowed to enjoy peacefully the fruits of the conquests you've made afield. Am I right?

De Sallus. Relations between my wife and me are pretty strained — in fact very strained, so just now I'd rather not be alone with her. It would put me in a false position.

De Randol. If that's the case, I'll stay.

De Sallus. All evening?

De Randol. Yes; the whole evening.

De Sallus. Thank you. You're a real friend. I'll try to make it up to you some day.

De Randol. Oh, by the way . . . (*An awkward pause.*) You were at the opera last night, weren't you?

De Sallus. Yes. Why?

De Randol. A good performance?

De Sallus. Excellent.

De Randol. Was Santelli good? Did she get personal recognition?

De Sallus. Recognition! It was a hit; a sort of individual triumph. Six curtain calls — and more if she would have taken them!

De Randol. She's really very good.

De Sallus. She's wonderful! I've never heard the part better sung? In the first act, when she sang her great

aria, "O lord of all the faithful, hear thou my prayer," the whole orchestra rose as one man! And again, in the third act, after her song, "O Paradise of Beauty" . . . I never heard such enthusiastic applause!

De Randol. Did she seem pleased?

De Sallus. Pleased? She was in the seventh heaven!

De Randol. Is she quite a friend of yours?

De Sallus. Oh, yes; I've known her some time. In fact, she asked me to join her and some friends for supper last evening after the performance.

De Randol. A big gathering?

De Sallus. No; about a dozen. She was fascinating.

De Randol. Is she agreeable off the stage?

De Sallus. Delightful. You see, she's a real woman. You may not agree with me, but it seems to me there are very few real women.

De Randol. Well; I know a few.

De Sallus. You may know some women who seem to be women. But they're not *real* women.

De Randol. Just how do you define a real woman?

De Sallus. I mean this: Our women — that is, society women, with a few very rare exceptions, are just show-pieces. They're pretty; and they're well turned out and attractive; and in their own drawing rooms they're very charming. But that's all. They're interested only in showing off, in making believe, in imitating charm — and it's only skin deep.

De Randol. Men fall in love with them, just the same!

De Sallus. Not often.

De Randol. I can't agree with you there.

De Sallus. Idealists, maybe; but not real men. Strong men, men with violent passions, even men who have the quality of true tenderness, don't fall in love with society women. And why? Because that kind of woman just doesn't know what love means. Look around. You know of plenty of affairs that are going on — after all, everyone knows everything these days. Can you point to a single case of violent, unreasoned, almost insane love for a woman of our world? I mean the sort of passion which existed in the old days. You cannot! It may flatter a man's vanity to have a society woman as a mistress. Of course it does — and it's amus-

ing; but in the long run, she bores him. On the other hand, look at these women of the stage. Not a one of them but has had at least half a dozen violent affairs. Affairs that ended in duels, or bankruptcies, or suicides, or tragedies of one sort or another. Men love them, because they know how to make themselves loved. They know what love means; they're real women! They have the skill — the art — the power to win a man. They seduce with a smile. They may not be pretty, but they can still attract and hold and establish themselves as mistresses of our hearts — and they can do it with just one glance. They have a something . . . a something overwhelming which our wives lack.

De Randol. Is Mme. Santelli one of that kind?

De Sallus. She's the queen of them all. How that woman can make a man want her!

De Randol. And nothing more?

De Sallus. A woman never takes the trouble to make herself wanted, if she doesn't intend to go farther.

De Randol. Are you trying to tell me that you enjoyed two first-nights in the same evening?

De Sallus. Certainly not; you shouldn't suggest such things!

De Randol. Well, you seemed so very satisfied — not to say conquering — that I didn't know. And then, too, you seemed so anxious to establish peace on the home front. I'm sorry if I was wrong . . . that is, for your sake!

De Sallus. Let's grant that you were wrong . . . even so . . .

(*Enter* Mme. de Sallus.)

De Sallus (*very cheerfully*). My dear, Jim's going to stay for dinner and spend the evening with us, too . . . he's promised . . . I persuaded him.

Mme. de Sallus. I congratulate you! How did you manage it?

De Sallus. Oh, it was easy. I just talked him into it.

Mme. de Sallus. And what did you say to him?

De Sallus. I told him how delightful it was to stay quietly beside one's fireside.

Mme. de Sallus. You may enjoy it. I like to travel.

De Sallus. Of course you do. But there's time for

everything. There are times when people take journeys rather rashly — on the spur of the moment.

Mme. de Sallus. How about that nine o'clock appointment of yours, Jim? Have you cancelled it?

De Randol. Yes, I've put it off.

Mme. de Sallus. You're not very much to be counted on — are you?

De Randol. Of course I am; but, you see, I'm an opportunist, too.

De Sallus. Will you excuse me, while I write a note? (*Goes to his desk at the far end of the room.*)

Mme. de Sallus (*to* de Randol). What's happened?

De Randol. Nothing. Everything is as it should be.

Mme. de Sallus. When do we leave?

De Randol. We're not leaving.

Mme. de Sallus. Why not? Are you crazy?

De Randol. Don't ask me now.

Mme. de Sallus. I'm sure he's setting a trap.

De Randol. Not a bit of it! He's perfectly happy and contented. Not a suspicion!

Mme. de Sallus. Then what's the reason why . . . ?

De Randol. Don't worry! He's quite all right.

Mme. de Sallus. I don't believe it. It can't be.

De Randol. But it is. He's confided to me how happy he is.

Mme. de Sallus. No, no; he only told you that to set his trap!

De Randol. You're wrong; he's quite happy and confident. The only thing he's afraid of is you.

Mme. de Sallus. Why of me?

De Randol. For the same reason that you were afraid of him a little while ago.

Mme. de Sallus. You must be crazy! And you certainly can't be trusted.

De Randol. I can be trusted; and to prove it, I'll lay you a wager that it's your husband who'll go out after dinner.

Mme. de Sallus. If he does, we'll leave, too.

De Randol. There's no need. I tell you, my dear, that you no longer have anything to fear.

Mme. de Sallus. You're so blind and so stupid you make me wild!

De Sallus (*from the other end of the room*). I have a bit of good news for you, dear. I've seen my way clear to renewing my subscription for our box at the opera.

Mme. de Sallus. It's really sweet of you to give me the chance of listening to your Santelli woman so often.

De Sallus (*impersonally*). She's said to be very talented.

De Randol. I'm told she's very charming, too.

Mme. de Sallus (*on edge*). It takes a . . . a . . . woman like her to interest you men!

De Randol. Now, that isn't fair!

Mme. de Sallus. Oh, yes, it is! That's the only kind of woman men lose their heads over. And, what's more, that's the only kind of love they call real.

De Sallus (*from the other end of the room; cuttingly*). Don't forget, my dear. We don't marry that kind — and marrying a woman is the surest proof that you've lost your head — over a woman!

Mme. de Sallus. What's marrying have to do with it? You satisfy their every whim, don't you?

De Randol. Having nothing to lose, there's no reason why they should hold back, is there?

Mme. de Sallus. What miserable creatures men are! A man marries a virgin because she is a virgin. And the next day he deserts her and falls in love with some woman — chiefly because she isn't a virgin and hasn't been one for so long that she's forgotten what the word means. Men fall in love with her because every rich or socially prominent man has slept with her. The more she's had, the higher priced she is, and the more she is wanted! Yes, and her quoted value is rated according to that idiotic and disgusting standard which, for Parisian men, depends only on how conspicuous and how frankly disreputable a woman has advertised herself to be. Yes, gentlemen; you're a sweet lot! Rotten! Rotten to the core!

De Sallus (*smiling and aloof*). I'd be careful, my dear, what you say. Someone might mention sour grapes.

SERVANT. Dinner is served. (*Hands a letter to* DE SALLUS.)

MME. DE SALLUS. Will you give me your arm, Jim?

DE RANDOL (*quietly*). I love you so very much!

MME. DE SALLUS. So very little, you mean.

DE RANDOL. With all my being!

DE SALLUS (*reading his letter*). Damn it! I've got to go out this evening, after all!

CURTAIN.

THIS SOFT BROWN DUST

By STANTON A. COBLENTZ

This soft brown dust upon the forest floor,
Under the redwood's maze of shadowy green, —
This dust that lingers where the laurels lean,
And where the slender-necked sequoias soar,
Has heard the wind-storms of the ages roar,
And watched, ten million times, a foggy screen
Billow, smoke-gray or milky-white; and seen
Tribes rise and wither, to come forth no more!

The wind-storms of the unborn centuries
Shall blow, and fog shall drift; but ever the same
This soft brown dust shall lie. And man, who flees
Even as now, out of the world's red flame
And burdening walls, shall rest his tired head
Here where the ages merge and live men meet the dead!

THREE MOMENTS IN A LIFE

By GEORGE MITRISIN

I.

Those ways have grown strange to me
And so I must leave them.
It is easy enough to leave;
I must not look into her eyes.

And is this, this all I have left
For all the years I have spent here?
A few books, some pictures,
That is all I care to take;
The memories I must leave behind.
If only the going
Could be in silence!
"They are gone now,
All gone
And you
Are the only one left."
To leave is as nothing,
I can not look into her eyes.
"Here is your old blue sweater,
Take it.
Perhaps it will be cold
Where you go."
The suitcase is worn and battered,
I have taken it on many trips,
This time it will not come back.
"You were better than the rest,
You stayed the longest.
You were my baby."
Her eyes say too much.
Close them.
I must leave this place!
I can promise to come back,
That I can do, though it is hard.
"Your father said it would be like this,
That they would leave me
And I

Would be left alone.
He said it would be like this.
And you are the youngest
And the last."
It is easy enough to leave —
I will not look into her eyes.
She brings out the old snapshots.
"This was taken at Niagara Falls,
Remember?
You took me there."
How can I take them?
I shake my head and say nothing.
That this parting could be in silence!
"You will come back often, won't you?
Perhaps I can cook you
Baked beans
Or roast duck
The way you always like them."
Each journey of returning
Is a cancer of the heart;
These ways have grown strange to me —
How far we have grown apart!

It is easy enough to leave;
I will not look into her eyes . . .
And the times that I return,
They eat into my soul.
Always on the table
Something.
"I thought you would like
To have this.
It is a picture of you
Taken as a baby."
I can not look into her eyes;
I shake my head.
How often has she waited for my knock?
And I, it is harder to go
Every time I return.
Each journey of returning
Is a cancer of the heart . . .
I do not like to go back any more.

II.

Too long my heart has been alone,
It does not know how to act.
How can I speak to you?
Tonight I will be silent,
Tomorrow is enough.
I ask no more
But always a tomorrow.
Perhaps the words will come.
Must I say I love you?
Too long my heart has been alone
To speak freely even to you.
Tonight will pass,
Yesterday has gone,
There must be a tomorrow;
Perhaps the words will come.
And I,
I shall write to you
Often.
I can not speak to you.
Too long my heart has been alone
And so
I must write to you
To say
I love you.
And I shall listen in the night
To the music of my songs . . .
Too long my heart has been alone.

III.

I hear no sound.
The sobbing and shouting in my brain
Is too loud
But the soldier goes down
Clutching the earth.
His mouth pressing the earth,
His mouth open against the earth,
The germinating earth;
Life is over quickly for him.

How like a typewriter
Is a machine-gun!
I drop flat upon the earth
Hugging the earth tightly to me
As if she were a big-breasted woman
And I her lover.
I lie still, hugging the earth.
It is damp with the dampness of spring.
And it is black,
Black as the riverbank
Of my childhood.
The earth is good,
It is always there,
It will always be there.
Even the redness that now it absorbs
Will be gone
And the damp blackness of the earth
Will turn green again
Forgetting the redness that was woven into it.
I lie still, hugging the earth
While hornets snip off grass-tops over my body.
The earth is good.
And then the sound
Of motors.
I hug the earth more closely,
Perhaps they will not notice me
I have gone through many plane strafings,
This one will be the same.
I will lie here,
Hugging the earth.
What strange dreams will I dream
When I am dead?
What strange memories will linger?
A phrase, perhaps,
"I do not know you."
And a memory of steps
Climbed in a sleepy trance.
What strange dreams will I dream
And stay here, dreaming,
Or rise and cross the field
Waiting for the sting

Of the wasp of Death?
Death is not a bitter thing.
The earth is good,
It is always there.
What strange dreams will I dream
When I am dead?

. . . . .

These moments: . . .
Why must I remember these?
There is so much else
That I would care to hold!
There is a touch of the hand,
A look of the eyes,
And a silence so deep
It needs no words . . .
Each moment is a piece of death
That, passing,
Knows there is no returning . . .
I will never come back.

FOR SUCH GREAT GLORY!

They say we helped to win the battle
By the way we died today.
But there's little glory in such prattle
To us who died today.

While from the host we fought against
Are dead as dead as we:
Since death is not by hate enhanced
Our hate is dead as we.

What is there now to love or hate
Now each by each lies chill?
What have we won that will abate
Our dying on this hill?

John Laurence Gilmartin

A E, POET AND MAN

By J. PATRICK BYRNE

"I know I am a spirit," wrote A E in the preface to his first book of poems, *Homeward: Songs by the Way,* published in 1894 when he was twenty-seven. Later came:

> Each fire that in God's temple lit
> Burns fierce before the inner shrine,
> Dimmed as my fire drew near to it
> And darkened at the light of mine.

Without recognizing that A E was, first, a mystic and religious teacher, and only afterwards rural economist and sociologist, editor, patriot, mystical painter and poet, no consideration of his poetry is possible. One Sunday a young man jumped on to the sea wall at Bray, and amazed the crowds out from Catholic Dublin by preaching a return to the worship of the old Irish gods, the Tuatha De Danann: "I stood upon a wall in my young enthusiasm and told the people that the golden age was all about them, that the earth underfoot was sacred as Judea."

George Moore in *Ave* gives this picture of the young A E

> . . . when earning forty pounds a year in an accountant's office he used to look at his boots wondering whether they would carry him to the sacred places . . . And fearing that they would rather not hold together for forty long miles he had gone to Bray Head and had addressed the holiday folk.
>
> I could hear the tumult, the ecstasy of it all. I could see him standing on a wall, his long, thin, picturesque figure with gray clothes . . . his arms extended in feverish gesture, throwing back his thick hair from his face, telling the crowd of the sacred places of Ireland, of the Druids . . . their mysteries.

Besides the power to see, this visionary had also the ability to paint those beings he saw striding, crowned with light, upon Ireland's holy hills. Yet he was an able accountant and practical economist, and he established in rural Ireland co-operative systems which proved so successful that the United States Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace, sent for him in 1934 to advise the American government

on rural problems. And A E was, within his limitations, a real poet:

> The children were shouting together
> And racing along the sands,
> A glimmer of dancing shadows,
> A dovelike flutter of hands.
>
> The stars were shouting in heaven,
> The sun was chasing the moon:
> The game was the same as the children's,
> They danced to the self-same tune.

George William Russell was born in Lurgan, a little town in County Armagh, April 10, 1867; he died in England, July 17, 1935. When his body was brought home to Dublin for burial, at his graveside mourned the leaders of both political parties, writer and workingman, Catholic and Protestant and atheist, all united in homage to a good man.

It was A E's personality, more than his writing, his painting, or his practical work, that counted. And personality can never be completely captured on the printed page. I have called A E a religious teacher. But his friend Oliver Gogarty has this to say:

> . . . he is one of those rare spirits who bring to us a realization of our own divinity and intensify it . . . He is an artist. He teaches nothing. He communicates himself, and the best in himself, which consists of poetry, loving kindness and a passion for beauty more than for anything else.

A E was a man of most varied interests and abilities — prophet, priest, and king all in one — yet gentle and kindly to the humblest. Gentlest of men, he held that the way to overcome rage or other evil was not to retaliate but to evoke its opposite, thus neutralizing it. But, as one person found when in some political verse he cast a slur upon Ireland, when justly roused his wrath was terrible. Despite a tendency to mere rhetoric, *"Ulster" — An Open Letter to Mr. Rudyard Kipling* (1912), is a magnificent rebuke. A E flies to the defense of poetry against misuse of its vesture in "a shallow newspaper article made to rhyme"; of his country against a "brawling bully" who "had the ear of the world and . . . poisoned it with prejudice and ignorance."

A E's poetry blows from the boundless mental and spiritual realm of the dreamer and mystic, mingled with

national imagination and pride, the whole bathed in the evanescent glow of an Irish twilight or dawn:

THE GREAT BREATH

Its edges foamed with amethyst and rose,
Withers once more the old blue flower of day:
There where the ether like a diamond glows
Its petals fade away.

A shadowy tumult stirs the dusky air;
Sparkle the delicate dews, the distant snows;
The great deep thrills, for through it everywhere
The breath of Beauty blows.

I saw how all the trembling ages past,
Moulded to her by deep and deeper breath,
Neared to the hour when Beauty breathes her last
And knows herself in death.

One of his earlier poems, this fairly represents A E at his best—almost, indeed, at his worst. He is the poet of ideas rather than of things. He changed little, developed little; to the last he never avoided either clichés or the most conventional of poetic diction. There is too much sameness of theme, imagery, metre, and rhythm in his verse — it would be instructive to know just how many times in *Collected Poems* occur such words as: twilight, dawn, crystal, diamond, blue, aery, ether, veil, mist, starry, high, and their derivatives. He was no lord of language.

A E's monotony of theme, of course, comes because most of his verse was written as a result of religious experience — for a moment he was lifted beyond himself, and after strove to put that experience into words:

DUST

I heard them in their sadness say,
"The earth rebukes the thought of God;
We are but embers wrapped in clay
A little nobler than the sod."

But I have touched the lips of clay,
Mother, thy rudest sod to me
Is thrilled with fire of hidden day,
And haunted by all mystery.

Paul's phrase yet stands: "secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter." Despite his intense sincerity, and the concept of beauty behind every poem, A E's command of technique was often unequal to the task of communication.

Replying to criticism he gives as reason for not labouring to improve upon first inspiration:

> However imperfect they seemed, I did not feel that I could in after hours melt and remould and make perfect the form if I was unable to do so in the intensity of conception, when I was in those heavens we breathe for a moment and then find they are not for our clay.

Elsewhere he says: "The end is creation, and creation is joy." With prose it was different. He writes to Yeats in 1922: "I hate letting any prose pass which is not as well united as I can make it. I can revise my prose though I cannot easily revise my verse."

The fact that twilight and dawn are traditionally times most conducive to religious meditation, may perhaps account for their prevalence in his settings and imagery.

As for rhythm, Yeats tells of him:

> Like myself, he knew nothing of music, but was certain that he had written them (his poems) to a manner of music . . . and one day, when we were staying with a Galway friend who is a learned musician, I asked him to listen to our verses, and to the way we spoke them. Mr. Russell found to his surprise that he did not make every poem to a different tune, and to the surprise of the musician that he did make them all to two quite definite tunes, which are, it seems, like very simple Arabic music . . . I varied more than Mr. Russell, who never forgot his two tunes, one for long and one for short lines.

A E's poetry has been compared to that of Emerson, whom he greatly admired. Another obvious comparison is with Blake, particularly in such a poem as *Resurrection*:

Not by me these feet were led
  To the path beside the wave,
Where the naiad lilies shed
  Moonfire o'er a lonely grave.

Let the dragons of the past
  In their caverns sleeping lie.
I am dream-betrayed, and cast
  Into that old agony.

And an anguish of desire
  Burns as in the sunken years,
And the soul sheds drops of fire
  All unquenchable by tears.

I, who sought on high for calm,
  In the Everliving find
All I was in what I am,
  Fierce with gentle intertwined;

Hearts which I had crucified
With my heart that tortured them;
Penitence, unfallen pride —
These my thorny diadem!

Thou would'st ease in heaven thy pain,
Oh, thou fiery, bleeding thing!
All thy wounds will wake again
At the heaving of a wing.

All thy dead with thee shall rise,
Dies Irae. If the soul
To the Everliving flies,
There shall meet it at the goal

Love that Time had overlaid,
Deaths that we again must die —
Let the dragons we have made
In their caverns sleeping lie.

In *Song and Its Fountains* (1932) A E tells of this poem's begetting and birth:

> Once I was met by a terror frightening me from my meditation. In my brooding there had been born the sense that in some life before this there had been mighty happenings, aspirations, downfall and a tragic defeat . . . I knew not what I had done, whether my will had dared to storm the heavens, and had been hurled back . . . broken, and in its madness had reversed its heaven-assailing desires and the divine powers had been turned to infernal uses, and even love . . . crucified in its despair. I seemed to be warned that if I persisted in this meditation I would arouse dragons . . . would be beset by powers I was too feeble now to master, and they would make wreck of the life which was slowly gathering itself from that defeat of the spirit. I was so overcome by this terror that I stayed the meditation, and a poem I had begun evoking that past was left uncompleted for thirty years. I could not continue it after two lines had come to my lips lest the very words might wind into their music the passion which once had made wreckage of the soul. It was only when I was old and desire had no power over me, that one day the poem completed itself. I do not think it was the poem I would have written if I had persisted in that tragic meditation. It had become wisdom rather than memory.

And in his last book, *The House of the Titans,* over and over again come echoes from Blake's *Tiger:*

Oh, in what deeps, what heights!
What faces ancient
What shining dancers
What multitude!
Oh, what was in the being
For what immortal things?

In *Collected Poems,* after many pages of "high" themes, and eternity, and the abstract presented abstractly, it is a

relief to come, in a poem with a title no more promising than many another — *The Well of All-Healing* — upon the place name Ballylee, with its instant evocation of Blind Raftery, and Mary Hynes, "the shining flower of Baile-laoi":

> There's a cure for sorrow in the well at Ballylee
> Where the scarlet cressets hang over the trembling pool:
> And joyful winds are blowing from the Land of Youth to me,
> And the heart of the earth is full.

But the verse falls away into vague imagery:

> Many and many a sunbright maiden saw the enchanted land
> With star faces glimmer up from the druid wave:
> Many and many a pain of love was soothed by a faery hand
> Or lost in the love it gave . . .

In some of his literally "occasional" verse — such as the volume *Gods of War,* called forth by the utter vileness of the "Great" war of 1914-18, or in *Salutation,* which he made for Easter 1916 — A E is most truly a poet; too, in it he is often most human, the man's personality shining through. There is much real humour in this affectionate parody of Alice Milligan's *In Cavan of Little Lakes,* twitting her on her activities, and the shifts to which the playwright was often put in the early days of the Irish dramatic movement:

> At Samhain of Little Plays,
> As I was in an awful stew;
> There were not dresses half enough
> And I was wondering what to do;
> There came this thought into my mind —
> Why, cut the dresses right in two!
>
> At Samhain of Little Plays
> I pinned the actors up with care,
> And gave to each a leg, a sleeve,
> And whispered in their ears, "Beware!
> My dears, for God and Ireland's sake
> Remember, this side out with care!"

In the early days of the movement A E gave his only play, *Deirdre,* to the Fay brothers for performance, and designed costumes and scenery for it. With Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* it was given in April, 1902.

In A E's belief the dominant principle in a man's life is begotten at the first complete union in a single experience of the inner and outer selves, mind and spirit, when the individual first becomes conscious of self — that self which has

lived a myriad lives before and carries in its consciousness the memory of those lives or, rather, is itself the product of all their innumerable actions and influences. He believed the impulse then born decides, though perhaps unconsciously, all after life; and that this bridal occurs in the turbulence of puberty. In *Vale* (March, 1931), his second last and one of his better books of verse, *Germinal* (1930) perhaps most perfectly expresses this — at the same time showing the unchanged texture of his verse from youth to age:

Call not thy wanderer home as yet
  Though it be late.
Now is his first assailing of
  The invisible gate.
Be still through that light knocking. The hour
  Is thronged with fate.

To that first tapping at the invisible door
  Fate answereth.
What shining image or voice, what sigh
  Or honied breath,
Comes forth, shall be the master of life
  Even to death.

Satyrs may follow after. Seraphs
  On crystal wing
May blaze. But the delicate first comer
  It shall be King.
They shall obey, even the mightiest,
  That gentle thing.

In ancient shadows and twilights
  Where childhood had strayed,
The world's great sorrows were born
  And its heroes were made.
In the lost boyhood of Judas
  Christ was betrayed.

Let thy young wanderer dream on:
  Call him not home.
A door opens, a breath, a voice
  From the ancient room,
Speaks to him now. Be it dark or bright
  He is knit with his doom.

This philosophy of being is the theme of *Song and Its Fountains.* One of his most profound books — it might well be studied by every aspiring poet — it yet can be read and enjoyed by anyone, for its language is of the simplest. Much of his prose is good because of this very quality of simple clarity. This is true of his posthumous *The Living Torch,* edited by Monk Gibbon, one of "A E's young men," mostly

from reviews and editorials written for *The Irish Statesman* during the seven years (1923-30) A E was its editor. This is a good book — to read right through, or to pick up and dip into, as an anthology; pertinent in its comment on books old and new, with some particularly good criticism of current poetry; and upon those "politics of time and of eternity" which — with the quest for Beauty, in which he saw divinity manifest — mainly concerned A E:

> Beauty the fiery plaything ran through the sun-gilded air.
> From dazzling cloud to dazzling cloud it climbed. Then from that height
> Unto your feet it sped adown long cataracts of light.
> It flickered mid the daffodils, and danced their gentle dance;
> Then rose up slenderly in air. It was as still as trance.
> It entered in, that magic thing into your being flowed:
> Through lips and eyes and fluttered hair its precious substance glowed;
> Its fairy candles burned on brow and ivory-slender limb,
> Lights that the spirit only sees and to all else are dim.
> It was so nigh I broke the trance to clutch that radiant thing;
> But it was gone, fleeter than bird upon a homing wing . .

He has said, "I have touched the lips of clay"; and that his poems were "all conceived and written in the open air." Despite this the roots of his poetry are not sufficiently in and of the clay of reality. He has also said in a letter to Seán O'Faoláin:

> I really tried to write poetry as if I were on the slopes of death myself and was testing my thought by that consciousness.

But though many of his poems are externally effective — being ear-minded he made beautiful vowel patterns in much of his verse — others do not satisfy. He was not sufficiently Gaelic to make his work part of the main stream of Irish literature, though he could appreciate the true Gaelic genius — which is not, as many people believe, fiery, but rather akin to ice, which can also sear, or to the chill, polished steel of a surgical scalpel. In his fine preface to O'Connor's *The Wild Bird's Nest* (Cuala, 1932), A E says:

> There is a character in the Irish poetry translated by Frank O'Connor which is in much of the literature in Irish, and which persists in Anglo-Irish literature in our time. I do not think this Irish character has been well understood. It arose partly out of the isolation of Ireland as an island, and partly because Ireland was never part of the ancient Roman empire. Those ancient Romans were great builders but they were also great destroyers . . . There were few intellectual influences to deflect the Irish culture from its natural development. As with other

> peoples its imagination stormed the heavens. There are in Irish literature many voyages to heaven world or faery . . . But the Irish never seem to have made any attempt to rationalize their vision. There are two poles in the literature: one where the visionary imagination rises to Ildathach the many-coloured land, while at the other pole there is a cold, hard, yet passionate realism . . . One might almost foresee in germ in the early and middle Irish poetry the cold yet passionate realism which is the dominating mood in the latest Anglo-Irish literature. The centuries have not yet brought us to the philosophic mind. I would like to speculate on the offspring of a marriage of cultures, the Irish with the European, which cannot be kept apart forever. These are intimations in the later poetry and prose of Yeats what an exciting literature might be born from that union.

This preface of A E's is one of the most illuminating short essays that I know on Irish literature. But though appreciative of essentially Irish work, A E could not bring his own poetry — which is, if anything, the antithesis of realism — in tune with what he once actually stooped to miscall "this half-crazy Gaeldom."

Vale (1931) fortunately belied its name, being followed in 1934 by *The House of the Titans.* The long title poem of this book is curious in that, embedded in it, is a fragment published years before as a separate poem under the title *Dana,* the Celtic Mother Goddess, symbolizing Earth:

> I am the tender voice calling "Away,"
> Whispering between the beatings of the heart,
> And inaccessible in dewy eyes
> I dwell, and all unkissed on lovely lips,
> Lingering between white breasts inviolate,
> And fleeting ever from the passionate touch,
> I shine afar till men may not divine
> Whether it is the stars or the beloved
> They follow with rapt spirit . . .
>
> I can enchant the trees and rocks, and fill
> The dumb brown lips of earth with mystery,
> Make them reveal or hide the god. I breathe
> A deeper pity than all love, myself
> Mother of all, but without hands to heal:
> Too vast and vague, they know me not. But yet,
>
> I am the heartbreak over fallen things,
> The sudden gentleness that stays the blow,
> And I am in the kiss that foemen give
> Pausing in battle, and in the tears that fall
> Over the vanquished foe. And in the highest
> Among the Danaan gods I am the last
> Council of mercy in their hearts when they
> Mete justice from a thousand starry thrones.

So far the earlier version. In the new setting follows immediately a line which is surely among his greatest:

> My heart shall be in thine when thine forgives.

There is no incongruity: A E's style, the texture of his verse, changed little. It is true, though, that Chapter IX of *Song and Its Fountains* implies the first conception and draft of this poem, there given in outline, belonged to his youth. But he is not at home in long poems such as this, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets,* nor in the older *Michael.* However, many of the shorter lyrics in these two books are among his best in poetry — *Sibyl,* whose genesis is discussed on pp. 95-8 of *Song and Its Fountains,* and *Dark Rapture.*

A E was both idealist and internationalist:

> We hold the Ireland in the heart
> More than the land our eyes have seen . . .
>
> . . . our lips would gladlier hail
> The firstborn of the Coming Race
> Than the last splendour of the Gael.

But his greatest work for humanity was, perhaps, his practical work for "the children of this clime," the Ireland in which he lived. He travelled every county on his bicycle, meeting and coming to understand every kind of person; preaching co-operation; founding shops and banks, dairies and markets; teaching the country people to free themselves from the grip of the gombeen man.

Almost certainly his best work for literature was — to use Eglinton's word — maieutic. He was a great discoverer and encourager of young writers; in his farewell to *The Irish Statesman* he says of himself:

> . . . he would like to be remembered for this, that he was the friend of the Irish poets, those who make the soul of the nation. (12 April 1930)

I come too late to be one of 'A E's young men,' but it is a title I should have been proud to bear.

> . . . if our dreams
> Be not immortal, the soul is not. The Soul
> Is but a congregation of high dreams.

POEMS

By Lois Raege

BY SOME STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCE THE WIND

We have been walking since before the dawn
Which came in quiet lines of light, fine-drawn
Against the mountain sky. This morning fear
Laid hold of me. How strange before the day
To find myself, with no remembrance, here,
Walking with him this narrow stoney way,
And know not why.

But we were friends within a mile or two.
And by mid-morning I had loved his face.
His voice had been my comfort and I knew
His way of speech, his pace.

Fear came again, when burnished sun, noon-high,
Shriveled the cowering shadows under rocks.
And through the noon, like arrowheads, the flocks
Of wild geese clove the southward autumn sky . . .
Impending dark, anticipated end.
I loved him for his strength. He was my friend,
A lean bulwark against the swift unknown.
I feared that he might leave me there alone;
Feared, if the path should split, that he might say,
"I go the westward, you the eastward way."
Beyond the rocks the shadows stretch. We stand
And watch the sun go down and then start on.
I fear no longer, for I understand
At least in part. When the last light is gone
I shall walk on as though it were still bright.
Beloved friend who knows no more than I
Of where we walk or why, if, in the night,
I lose the path and plunging downward cry
In final terror, by some strange circumstance
The wind beneath these clouds would snatch the sound.
You would go on in unwilled ignorance
Until you chanced to speak or turned around.
From noon to dusk somehow I learned that man
Is not accompanied, only loved, by man.

But he can walk the length
Of night, alone, with never much more than
His own frail strength.

The night is come now. Sometimes, as we walk,
Across our private darknesses we talk.

ENTER A STRANGER

Are you the rightful tenant of this place
Which through the seasons heard no other sound
Than rain and soft expectant wind? Retrace
Your way across the threshold, or propound
Good and sufficient reason to unlace
Your boots and light a fire and loose your hound.
From summer's end to summer's end the grace
Of quiet held this house, and all around.
They used to come. That stair was hollowed out
By patient, timid steps; but all their talk
Was echoes. Yes, I watched the stars and prayed
For someone to fill up this room. The stout
Walls tremble. There is tumult where you walk.
You are a stranger and I am afraid.

THE UNDEFINED

More cruel than blindness under golden noon
Is this half-sight with which I have been cursed.
More kind is death within the sealed cocoon
Than birth into an air which from the first
Has been opaque to me. It is as though
I could not see a star until it be
Charted by some discerning eye; or know
The willowy Spring till it be told to me.
The most, born into blindness, do not fret.
The few, like splendid torches on a way
That climbs the moonless night, serve but to whet
The thirst for light among the minds that fray
The hanging dark, among the undefined
Who can not see alone, yet are not blind.

FOR WHOM DOES THE POET WRITE?

By HARRY ELMORE HURD

The distinguished author-critic, Jessica Nelson North, reviewing Edna St. Vincent Millay's *Make Bright the Arrows,* in the March, 1941, issue of *Poetry,* accuses the poet of compromising her art in order to reach the uncritical "gabbling geese" (among whom are certain publishers) who "still flock after magazine poets, imitators, secondrate hacks." The castigation concludes: "Ah, but that part of the public should never have been considered at all! The tea-sippers, the lecture-goers, the autograph-hunters — what place have they in the poet's life? There is still the scattered and humble audience that knows good poetry from bad. They are the ones to be pleased, they and the still, small voice of conscience."

I have no desire to fight for Edna St. Vincent Millay, since she is a person well able to shoot her own arrows, but Jessica North's half-truths provoke the question: For whom does the poet write?

The indiscriminate classification of "tea-sippers, lecture-goers and autograph-hunters" as "gabbling geese" is more rhetorical than rational, since it is a fact beyond dispute that most of the poets whose names are significant in our literature have appeared in magazines, from Malcolm Cowley, Hart Crane, Babette Deutsch, George Dillon, T. S. Eliot, Arthur Davison Ficke, John Gould Fletcher, and Robert Frost through the alphabet to Robinson Jeffers. Furthermore, I for one do not consider myself a goose for having joined with other "geese" who flocked to hear such poets as Frost and Sandburg read their poems, much less am I ready to admit that the autographed volumes of poems in my library prove that I am either a goose or a poetic moron.

It is obvious that much magazine verse is a travesty upon poetry — frequently sinking to the level of "baby-cuts-a-tooth" or "wets-its-diapers" — but magazines also publish poems of abiding beauty, so why fulminate against "magazine poets" because "hacks" and "imitators" counterfeit the true coin of the poetic realm?

It well may be that intelligent readers are turned away from poetry because of the blatant idiosyncrasies of those poets who fail to establish any nexus between poetry and the life-experience of average human beings, causing them to conclude that all poets are eccentrics and consequently to turn them back to poets who have survived the test of time. If poetry has become so subtle and superior that it is understandable by only a coterie of mutual admirers, then it will die — and it ought to perish. No sane person would uphold shabby norms of poetry but, surely, poetry is not an intellectual *hokus-pokus,* mumbled by pseudo-intellectuals who look down their noses at the laiety, while calling them "gabbling geese."

Although I am neither a critic nor a subscriber to the affirmation of Oliver Wendell Holmes to the effect that God made critics out of the materials which were left when He had finished creating poets, I grow impatient with practitioners of poetry who fabricate private concepts of the essence of poetry and then regard with contempt all persons who refuse to elevate them to a poetic papacy. The "scattered" audience "that knows good poetry from bad" is not as humble as Jessica North would have us believe, but is frequently as intolerant of difference as are the Fundamentalists in religion. When criticism smacks of intolerance, it loses the catholicity which is a prime characteristic of true scholarship. Socrates said: "That which I understand is good: that which I do not understand, I assume to be equally good." Many critics of poetry apparently regard poetry which may be understood without turning to appended notes to learn that "the little white mule symbolizes the spirit of early Christianity" as bad. There is an audience midway between the eccentricities of the experimentors in poetic technique and anapestic assininity which also knows "good poetry from bad" — an audience larger than critics suspect.

Poetry is life and life is more than cerebration. The other day a brilliant artist came into my study to see how much I have changed since he drew my portrait twelve years ago. He was troubled by the self-discovery that his technique is perfect, but cold. "I haven't experienced enough of life," he lamented. "I am resolved to get about until I also feel deeply enough to quicken my technique with

emotion." Poetry likewise may possess the crystal perfectness of the Odes of Pindar, while remaining as cold as ice. For some of us, poetry begins in the emotional glow induced by coming face-to-face with some micronic aspect of universal experience — which may be as subjective as an idea or as objective as sunlight fracturing against moving water; the mind, sensitized by a fresh awareness of beauty thrusting through the veil, seeks words with which to weave a pattern of beauty — words concise and unostentatious: words with which to fashion images and symbols of an idea which shall, in turn, induce in the reader something of the original emotion felt by the poet as he perceived some aspect of universal loveliness. In lyric verse, words are also wedded to music. A quatrain from George Dillon's *Autumn Movement* perfectly illustrates the ideal union of concept, words, simply expressed, and music:

> Time has its poems, though it writes them slower.
> The rock remembers — it will work its art.
> The dust forgets. O footsteps going nowhere,
> How brief your hieroglyphs upon my heart!

No coldness here, much less sentimentality, but rather the interaction of emotion and intellect. The concept *within* the poem determines its dimensions, although some of us would hesitate to excommunicate from the sanctuary of poetry the lyric, in which idea is subordinated to the pleasure induced by reoccuring sounds — as in the poetry of Poe.

That poet — and his poetry — will live when flesh of words covers some aspect of such universal experiences as youth, gallant, but doomed; the frustrations of dreams in a mechanized world; the terrific aloneness of old age; or the enigma of death. The form of the poem is secondary to concept.

The innovations of today become the clichés of tomorrow: a statement as true as it is trite, and yet experimentalists are constantly elevating form, or lack of it, to primal place. The deification of novelty is not necessarily good, nor is a technique necessarily bad because it is old. The poetry of Robert Frost offers an inspiring example of the power of universal ideas when embodied in simple and conventional forms. Simplicity is a difficult art: conversely, a plentitude of unfamiliar words may cover a paucity of ideas. All words

are grist for the poet's mill, but why impede the flow of the poetic line by using a vocabulary which drives readers of average intelligence to a dictionary? Poets have used words "with earth on them" ever since Wordsworth resolved to emulate the speech of his rustic neighbors. No poet worth his salt defends the use of sweet or hackneyed words, but such words as phthistic, necrotomy, epicentrum, anacrobic, and formication remind one reader of Roy Fuller's line:

> Something was set between the words and the world.

There is strength in the slang phrase: "I've got ants in my pants," but when a poet uses *formication* to indicate the ants-crawling-on-skin-uneasiness of his brain, he sounds strangely like certain colored parsons who awe their congregations with "two-bit words." We of the Anglo-Saxon tradition are blessed with a vocabulary which is both strong and uninvolved.

Another consideration of vocabulary is the increase of filth in so-called modern poetry. A line from David Daiches may well furnish us with a text:

> God yawns to hear the lewd travail of men.

Men likewise yawn when adult poets emulate the little boy who, having acquired a dirty word, chalks it upon the school fence for the sexual edification of his teacher. The lewd is neither the true beatitude, nor is it adult. One does not need to be a prude or a puke who fails to react poetically to a poet's gossip about a certain "Harry L":

> . . . whose whores and gin
> Had dwindled to a slick smile in the drug store.

This couplet would not be worth mentioning if it were not typical of a drift in "smart" poetry.

Much plain poppycock masquerades as subtlety. Two examples typify a great bulk of nonsense in poetry. Allowing great latitudes to the poet's imagination, I still ask just how does an animal

> Hatch out the ancestral sob
> In its nocturnal dust?

Again, am I supposed to find sense in these lines?

> Courage is a diorama with sick elks
> And a man with warts excavating stars.

If this sort of thing is highbrow, then "I'll take sasparilla," along with Irving Cobb.

Just what is a "blue enameled heart"? How intelligent is a poet who is "saliva-wise"?

It will always be true that an inventory of our garden is likewise a catalogue of our pests. Experimentation keeps poetry from atrophy and critics exercise a wholesome Socratic function by stabbing poets with questions, but neither criticism nor experimentation serve a high purpose when they become smug and abusive. Since poetry was divided into lines — to emphasize the fact that it was different from prose — poets have been busy with their little schemes of symbolism, imagism, *vers libre,* polyphonic verse, and verse with neither punctuation nor capital letters; yes, poets have even turned to making geometric patterns, such as wine-glasses, with words, but the concept *within* the form remains the heart of poetry. When experimentation vitalizes poetry, I am glad: when it becomes the fetish of a cult, I am sad, for it deepens the conviction of sane men that the poet is a sort of Oscar Wilde walking down the thoroughfare of life bearing a lily in his hand. When I wander through an art gallery and discover a group of awed admirers clustered about a canvas which portrays an egg superimposed upon a triangle, I share with the worshippers of the geometric a certain joy in balanced masses and juxtaposed pigments, but I am too "lowbrow" to experience a glow of aesthetic pleasure, even when the painting is labeled: *Poet, Thinking.* And so it is with poetry — let those who will write for "the scattered and humble audience that knows good poetry from bad" but may they be humble enough to suspect that not all of divine light is theirs — there may be poets who write for magazines who are acquainted with beauty, and persons among the "gabbling geese" who are not morons even though they find inspiration in poetry which they understand.

I AM A REALIST

By GILEAN DOUGLAS

I am a realist. I am a poet who writes about hills and trees and the dancing of lithe water. I am also the person who tells you that these two statements do not contradict each other. There is no contradiction; there is merely misinterpretation of that much-abused word, realism.

When my next-door neighbor says: "No, I am going to be absolutely realistic about this!" I can be sure that he is going to discuss all the unpleasant, but not any of the pleasant, aspects of the point in question. When some newspaper writer speaks of "the realism of the totalitarian nations," I know that those particular countries must have gone in for another orgy of frightfulness. The so-called realist poets yammer obscenities, the realist artists create nightmares, the realist musicians delight in discordant noises. Realism is a word which has become entirely disassociated from its original meaning and is now practically a synonym for unpleasantness.

The dictionary defines the word real as: "actual, true, genuine." Of realism it says: "The endeavor in art or literature to reproduce nature or describe life as it actually appears." Now, no actual, true, or genuine conception of anything can be obtained if only a a part of it is shown and not the whole. There will only be distortion and misconception. If you were a visitor from Mars to whom I was explaining this world you had never seen, what pitiful half-truths and misshapen ideas you would carry away with you if I described only the disease and greed and poverty of our earth! Yet that is exactly what the self-styled realists do and censure all others for not doing.

"To reproduce nature or describe life exactly as it appears." How plain that is! Yet when I tell how spring comes to my mountains or describe the vigor of soil or the loveliness of growing things, I am shouted at as a "romanticist" and told that I am "out of step with the times." What times have there ever been upon this earth in which there were not the seasons, the soil, and the growth of that soil?

Before we came there were the mountains, the trees, the rivers; after we have gone they will still remain. When our cities in their pettiness and ugliness have been swept away, spring will still come in beauty and the moon will still ride the heavens. These things are real. There is as much realism in beauty and wholesomeness and joy as there is in sordidness and sorrow and terror. In the past we, as a nation, have been accused of ignoring the bad and accenting the good; now we are in the greater danger of reversing the process.

To most of my acquaintances — not my friends — realism seems to consist of city life with its noise and dirt, modern writings with their garbage cans and the glorification of all things material. I am familiar with these things also and I know that some of them are decidedly necessary. What I refuse to admit is that they are everything. Why is the congestion and grime of a city factory district any more real than the loveliness and solitude of the mountains outside my door? Why am I termed an escapist — or worse — because I choose to speak and write of the beauty of the world rather than its ugliness? Those things are both parts of the same whole — that whole which makes the reality which is our world. If I enlarge the disease and poverty of the earth so that they fill my entire vision, I cannot see them clearly or hope to cure them. I shall only wallow in mud and darkness because I have lost the stars which would have shown me my road.

I write verse. I write of love, the tenderness of growing things and of the dreams which fill all our hearts. During recent years I have also written "realistic" poems on social conditions and the generally gangrened condition of civilization. I have received hundreds of letters thanking me for my poems on the beauty of life, but only a score or so praising my comments on its sordidness. Even then the latter seemed to refer to the form rather than the content of my verse. Are all these people who prefer beauty escapists and dwellers in the ivory tower? I don't believe it. I believe that nature is manifesting in them her great urge towards the true balance. In the sordidness around them they feel instinctively that they are seeing only half the shield and that there is another side equally real, equally true.

In these days of war and famine and death the "realists" censure me bitterly because I continue to write of hope, of faith, of love, and of nature; because I leave their interminably futile discussions of battle strategy to go up to my mountain cabin which is peacefully minus newspapers or a radio. Watching these same acquaintances of mine jittering with headline nerves and losing their health in that splendid disease of civilization, "war anxiety," I know that it is I who am being realistic, not they.

Everyone of us is a soldier in today's "war of nerves" and one of the first duties of a soldier is to keep fit. In nature and in solitude I find vigor of mind and body, so I see to it that I take this medicine. The prescription, in varying doses, would also help most of my jittery acquaintances, but they have convinced themselves that there is something weak, unreal, perhaps even traitorous, about such a course. They continue to scourge themselves into hysteria with the whips of their own unrealistic thinking.

I do not shirk my duties, I do not deny my obligations. There is, however, one thing which I place above all others in these troubled days: to speak and write more than ever of the warmth and loveliness and truth of nature and of humanity. I try to show the doubting that faith is as real as bread and beauty truer than any ugliness. I try to unveil that lovely half of realism which the "realists" have endeavored, so mistakenly, to hide.

The decriers of the ivory tower should remember that it is only from high places that one can see the earth whole.

ETERNAL

By Gilean Douglas

Grey wind and a grey sky and grey clouds flying,
Chill wind and a bare tree and the cold wood crying —
This, you say, is the dusk of life
And this, you say, is dying;
But dusk is the pregnant seed of dawn
And a soul is death's denying.

TWO POEMS

By ANNA PLOSKY

LOVE BUILT A TEMPLE

Love built a temple high upon a cliff —
A lovely, solitary place;
And in her ivory house she kept a mirror
To reflect her beauteous face.

The walls were draped with precious, golden curtains,
And there were carpets on the floor —
The rarest skins of snow-white leopard cats;
And there was stained glass in the door.

Love dwelt like a goddess in her house; but, oh,
Her life came to a sordid end,
For she was not so very wise — you see,
She locked out Faith, her goodly friend.

MOON ON THE WATER

Who has broken a corner off the Moon?
Was it you, Wind?
It could have been you,
When you stumbled carelessly after a fleeing cloud.

Or was it you, Night?
Did your clumsy fingers break it
When you coaxed it from its bed at twilight?

Now it looks grotesque with one corner gone:
Forsaken like a child's toy,
Broken and forgotten in a corner of a dusty nursery.

Whether it was you, Wind,
Or you, Night,
You left the telltale traces of your deed.
You spilled the broken pieces in the shallow pasture lake.
There they twinkle on the inky blackness of the water,
Like fireflies darting through the cool hours
Of the long darkness.

POEMS

By Elizabeth J. Savage

THE LONELY DEAD

Do not refuse to think upon the dead.
Though it be grief exquisite to recall
Even the body's imprint on the bed,
Or trace of summer shadow on a wall.
Repeat the words they loved, the songs they knew;
Weave a familiar garment for the ghost;
Although his name be constant pain to you,
Be to the dead a gay and gracious host.
For what man knows of heaven or what of hell?
May it not be the dead have brief respite
Within the hearts of those who loved them well
From silence and eternities of night?
Ah, cherish the lonely dead — it well may be,
This love, their only immortality.

FANTASY

A cigarette in a pale god's fingers,
Lit by a gleam from a passing star,
Thrown to the wind and nothing lingers,
This is the thing we mortals are:
Bundles of dust in paper wrappers,
Stamped with the seal of a nameless name,
Careless breath of a god blown through us,
Fitfully smoked to a dying flame —
Brand or flavor, age or date?
Ashes are hard to designate!

SONNET

I know I can not have you and I know
The worthy, gallant thing for me to do —
Enacted by lost lovers long ago
Who's poemed passions have appealed to you —
Pick up my train (if I but wore a train)
And bid you fare and bid you well, my Lord,
And bow and sweep away in rich disdain

To make the Roman gesture with your sword
(If you but wore a sword). Yet I shall stay,
Cursing myself and you, consume my youth,
Pretending you inimical to love or truth —
Knowing myself infected to the bone,
Sure as a star, inflexible as stone.

TO A LITTLE GIRL

You are the morning
And all that is high noon.
You are the evening
And all hopes under the moon.

Tarry a little longer,
Do not grow older.

You are the gentle rain
And the early snowfall.
You are the tender pain
That makes life sweet to all.

Tarry a little longer,
Do not grow older.

You are every song
And the one true prayer.
When life becomes long,
You make it gayer.

Tarry a little longer,
Do not grow older.

You can smile at death
And every misery,
For in your every breath
Is more eternity.

Tarry a little longer,
Do not grow older.

Charles Angoff

LEON FELIPE, SPANISH WAR POET

By WILLIS KNAPP JONES

León Felipe Camino Galicia, who since 1900 has been publishing poetry under the pen name of León Felipe, is one of those who has felt most keenly the cataclysm of his native Spain.

Since his birth in Tábara, Zamora, in 1884, he has been a wanderer, knowing the New World as resident in Panamá and Mexico, and as professor of Spanish in several universities of our country. Still, his heart is Spanish, and it has been wrung by the injustice of foreign intervention at home.

Though he proclaims, "I am not a professor of hate," yet occasionally, moved by divine indignation, he thunders forth such a fiery Hymn of Hate as "Está muerta. Miradla!" (She is dead. Look at her!) The rest of the time he is contented with hurling ironic shafts at the enemies of his Spain.

Many of his earlier poems were beautifully turned phrases about the things and people seen during his travels. Some are found in *Versos y oraciones de caminante* whose first volume was published in Madrid in 1920, with a later volume issued in New York in 1929. His later work, however, shows him as a conscious artist, experimenting with new forms and combinations, as in *El payaso de las bofetadas y el pescador de caña* (Mexico, 1938). This volume of poetic prose interspersed with verse is intended to be recited. "He who gets slapped" is the Spain of Don Quijote, a fusion of Prometheus and Clown. "The fisherman" is the foxy Englishman, representative of a nation that goes fishing over the week-end and returns to find it too late to do anything about the world crimes already consummated. The volume contrasts the fishpole of those who want peace with the lance of La Mancha of those craving justice.

A sequel, *Gran responsable* (1939), charges that the poet is the one responsible for the blood, hatred, and ruin in the world.

With his poetic figures, powerful style, and well-turned phrase, León Felipe from his refuge in Mexico is publishing some of the most emotional of Spanish verse. One volume, *El Hacha* (The Ax), was translated by Waldo Frank.

The poems that follow are taken from a volume published in 1939, *Español del éxodo y del llanto* (The Spaniard of Exodus and Lamentation). The meter of the poetry is rather irregular. Much is unrhymed. I have tried to reproduce its form as closely as possible.

QUERY

Am I a demagogue?
For dictators in the plaza have I ever given a cheer?
Not I! I've merely said,
And asked over and over:
"Who's been throwing sand in the motor around here?"

WHERE IS GOD?

Three lessons and a Catechism
with a One Act Play.

"Oh, would that some one could tell me
Where I shall be able to find him!
I only know where he is not,
And I know he is not with you."

To the Memory of Antonio Machado*

FIRST LESSON

God has existed always, children dear,
Long ere
The Phalanxes in various manners
Stamped Him there
Upon their uniforms and banners:
Before
The Legions ever started to baptize
With His own Holy name, the troops
And trimotors that sail the skies;
Before
They ever nailed His image above the door
Of all their barracks
And prisons where their victims rot;
Before 't was worn on holy relics around the necks
Of archbishops

*Modern Spain's greatest poet, executed by rebels during the Civil War.

And prostitutes, best forgot,
And generals, brothers to Iscariot;
Before
It was considered on the Exchange, smart business
To pronounce His name.
God has existed always and for all the world,
For rich and poor the same,
Just as the earth existed centuries
Ere crooks partitioned it, as their fair game.
Then God
Belonged to all of you
As water, light, and wind were common property;
But now, like gold, He is possessed by just a few.
No longer does He bless the just;
He blesses rapine and deceit,
And those who have the mightiest fleet;
And there is one in Rome
Who does not hesitate these blessings to repeat.

Come, listen well, my children,
Listen well to me.
No instructor in hate am I;
I'd rather be
Professor of Love and Charity.
I do not know if you
Are children of the Carpenter of Galilee,
Or of the dictator; I only know
That you are God's own sons, all you who hark to me;
And so I say to you —
To bring my lesson to an end —
I say in simple words, and without rancor,
Not as a demagogue, but as a friend,
That yesterday some men
Stole from the rest of us everything:
Our strength, our song, the land we trod,
And
Now today
These same men, my children,
Have robbed us of our God.

III

I KNOW WHERE HE IS

God, who knows everything,
Is cleverer than most men know.
Now by some outlaw archbishops
He has been kidnapped, and the crafty gang
Has made Him broadcast on the radio:
"Hello, I'm here with them. Hello!"

That doesn't mean He's on their side
But that He's there within their prison wall.
He tells us where He is, that's all,
So we may go,
A rescue party for the God we know.

THERE IS NO GOD!

A One Act Play in twenty-four short lines.
Scene: Back stage.

Characters

The audience
The Director of the Revue
García, the prompter
The voice of the Wardrobe Mistress
The voice of a Stage Hand
Chorus of Players
and
God, who does not appear.

What does the audience want? Why do they yell?
What is the reason for the loud to-do?
(That is the wrathy question at the prompter hurled
By the Director of the great Revue.)
They are demanding God. They want Him out.
Well, send Him out and let Him take a bow.
It's not yet time to give His entrance cue.
Then cut the show, and send Him out right now!
O. K. Hey, God! Hey, God, go on the stage!

(The fat Director shouts in voice so grim)
Hey, God! Where's God? Has anyone seen God:
García, go and look for Him!
There is no God,
(The Wardrobe Mistress calls it out)
There is no God!
(A burly Stage Hand adds his shout)
You say there is no God?
(Surprised, the actors say)
No God? No God!
(Purple with rage the Prompter stops the play)
The theatrical God with all His trappery
By Franco's gang was spirited away!

DISTRIBUTION

(*To Franco*)

Thine is the estate,
The house,
The horse,
And the pistol.
Mine is the ancient voice of all this land.
You remain here with it all,
While I'm naked wanderer across the world.
But I leave you mute . . . yes, mute.
For how will you go garner all the wheat,
And keep the hearth fires burning,
If I have carried off Spain's song?

SPAIN

At last the family's gone off to bed,
Excepting you, just you alone.
What are you doing, standing like a ghost?
I'm coming. Tell me, where's my bed?
This way! I'll show you. Follow me.
(Doors that are closed as one goes through,
Lights that black out at once,
Stairways going down and down,

Low, narrow passage underground,
Crypts, niches . . .) 11 . . . 44 . . . 176
4 X 11; 4 X 11; 4 X . . . Here!
Good Night!
Good Night! . . . Listen, don't set your shoes outside the door.
The servants have all fled. There will be none to wait
on you tomorrow. Good Night!
Good Night! (Pause)
At last the family's all gone off to bed.
Spain! Sleep now saps at your life;
As myths lie heavy o'er your history,
And o'er the myths hangs silence . . . silence.

BUT WHO IS THE BISHOP?

I shall explain it all
Quite otherwise.
The bishop is the man
Who gives to Tragedy a gay disguise,
The man full of deceit.
The poet is the man who strips it bare;
The poet is one who waits for gloom
And then accepts it there.
The bishop says:
"On that tomorrow when you leave this earth,
You'll travel to a better land,
Where of wine and bread and butter there's no dearth."
The poet says:
"Man must be always battering a door,
A wall, a shed,
With his heart
And with his head."
I know, I know your sympathies
Are not with poets, but with bishops instead.

FOUR POEMS FROM THE KOREAN

Translated by Grace W. Mitchell

A king of Korea, whose queen was returning to China though he had followed to dissuade her, wrote in 17 B. C. one of the oldest Korean poems that is recorded. In the fourth century after Christ the art of calligraphy, parent both of painting and poetry in the Orient, came to Korea from China. Literary civil service examinations began in 957 A. D. and from then until the end of the nineteenth century poetry was of central importance to preferment, pleasure, and distinction. Without high poetic ability a man could not enter the service of the government. Generals vied in poetry contests. Cups floated down the artificial river of the Ear Shell Pavilion, but guests might not lift one until they had composed a line of poetry. Ambassadors to China and Japan were successful according to their poetic talents, and the genius of some of them is recorded in the annals of those nations.

Following generations honored the home and village and descendants of a scholar who had "held a brush in the presence of the king" and proved preëminent. The title of the collection by Yi Kyu-Yong in which these poems appear, *Anthology of Poems from East of the Sea,* Enlarged and Corrected (1939), acknowledges the origin of Korean poetry in China across the Yellow Sea. Little affected by the change of spoken Chinese, less embroidered than most Chinese poetry with intricate literary allusion, Korean poetry has an archaic quality which enhances its charm for Japanese and Chinese readers and a directness of metaphor which recommends it to Western understanding.

"Every statesman was a scholar and every scholar a statesman," and after a writer's death his complete writings, though they formed a hundred volumes, were published by his friends and descendants. "Sleeping and Rising" was preserved in the *Literary Remains of "Four Virtues"* — which was the pen-name of Soh Kau-Chung (1420-1488). His *Complete Mirror of the Eastern Kingdom* (1463) follows in importance the *History of Three Kingdoms* (1345) and the *History of Koryo* (1454) among all Korean histories. Taken to Japan a century and a half later by the invading troops of

Hideyoshi, it was reprinted there by a member of the Tokugawa family then, and again by the Government General of Korea a decade or two ago. Soh Kau-Chung is also the author of the only Korean geographical work, *The Earth-Loaded Cart Record* (1470), to which later writers have added. Perhaps this poem protests the urgency of such tasks. "Odong" is the Korean word for paulownia.

"Western Valley" was the pen-name of Pak Syei-Tang, who lived at the end of the seventeenth century and is best known for his *Complete Canon of Mountains and Forests,* which deals with "every conceivable matter with fruits of the earth and their culture."

The silver toad, Chan-chu, was once the lady of Chinese love poems, Ch'ang Ngo. But she stole the elixir of immortality from her husband, How I, inventor of arrows, and fled with the elixir to the moon, where she was punished by being transformed into a frog or toad. All this happened in the golden age of Yao and Shun.

At pavilions and crossroads in Korea there usually waits a chessboard and men, octagonal wooden pieces engraved with the characters of king, horse, dragon, and so on; the checkers are the black and white pellets of a game which in its simplest form is played like tic-tac-toe and is called "go" by the Japanese.

This was the century of Manchu invasions, and the encampment was probably set up against them. The worst incursion had occurred in 1627, when the court was temporarily driven to the island of Kang Wha.

Nam Pyeng-Ch'yel of the early nineteenth century took the pen-name, "Library of the Jade Tablet Insignia." He and his brother Nam Pyeng-Kil are the outstanding Korean scholars of astronomy and mathematics, and they also published a treatise on calculating auspicious days and times. Moist sleeves imply tears in Oriental poetry, the tears that cling to flowing sleeves which have been raised to conceal them.

"Fragrance of Bamboo" had also the pen-name, "Tinkling Jade-stone," and as she was simply a kisang (or geisha) of Pyengyang, I do not know when she lived. Pyengyang, an ancient capital of Korea, has been long known

for the beauty, talent, and numbers of its kisang. Chosen in childhood for their grace and beauty, the kisang grew up in schools where they were taught dancing, voice, lute-playing, decorum, Chinese literature, calligraphy, and the composition of poetry. Attendant at the banquets and excursions of the poets, they not only distracted scholarly officials with the studied allurement of black eyes and with the flash of rainbow sleeves above the bowls of wine, but they also added a feminine sparkle and delicacy to the classical exercises about which even the gayest of occasions were centered. There is much tragedy inherent in this system, even for the kisang, and many songs of the kisang are filled with the pathos of separation and abandonment. Yellow, the earth color, is also the imperial color of earth's ruler, contrasting with the blue of Heaven.

SPRING SCENE AT RIVER TOWN

By *Fragrance of Bamboo*

Over the gate the willow,
The thousand cords of willow,
The myriad threads of willow
Are hanging softly down,
A smoke-like cloud of willow,
A jade-green screen of willow,
Of river-loving willow
That is hiding River Town.
The mist is one with the river,
The mist and the rain and the river,
And the herd-boy from the river
Comes careless, fluting, by,
Home through the yellow twilight,
Imperial yellow twilight,
The willow-threaded twilight,
Under a dusky sky.

A Py-yang Kisang

EVENSONG

By *Nam Pyeng-Ch'yel* (early nineteenth century)

The moon is a dangling hook
Fishing for pearls of frost

Where on the garden pool
Light shadows sink and are lost.
Not yet suspecting dawn,
The grass-hid insects brawl;
But on the water, lotus blooms
Wait, prescient of the fall.
The gradual mists of heaven
Close 'round my still distress.
It is so hard to keep the heart
Unscorched by anxiousness.
Through dark of night my coat and sleeves
Gleam cool, fog-moist, and white.
And from the little tower above
Five drum-notes probe the night.

SLEEPING AND RISING

By *Soh Kau-Chung* (1420-1488)

Deep and deep are the shadows that fall on the bamboo screen,
Drifting, drifting the fragrance from the pond where lotus lean,
And high above my pillow a dream through the fragrance weaves;
But, importunate, the rain drums on the odong* leaves.

*paulownia.

AT MY CABIN OVERLOOKING THE SEA

By *Pak Syei-Tang* (end of the seventeenth century)

Between the rice fields little paths run eastward to the sea
Where blue-green pines are leaning out against a green-blue sky,
And westward, groves of orchids, of perfumed herbs and orchids,
Dark against the clearness of this lucent evening lie.
The moon is at third quarter and its silver toad hangs headlong;
From ten thousand li come curvetting white horses of the tide
Past islands insubstantial, floating, small, and sea-strewn
Not unlike scattered chessmen or checkers brushed aside,
Toward ranks of elms like banners high above a lone encampment,

That vanish in the distance where the north barbarians ride.
Ah, men are mixed of baseness; the bitter apprehending
Comes to my burdened heart and my head drops shamed
and low.
But my single wick is smoking with a thin and wayward
fragrance
And my hundred ill reflections, smoke-borne, melt like snow.

FOUR QUATRAINS FOR NOVEMBER

TRANSITION

October glory flames across the hills,
Flames and is gone and from the dying embers
The bare trees rise — gaunt, melancholy ghosts
Of past Novembers.

FALL PLANTING

Not empty quite November's hands. She brings
Dried grasses, berries bright on shriveled stems;
From silk-lined milkweed pods the last light seed she flings—
A partner in frost's clever strategems.

PROPHECY

The light November snow powders the frozen ground;
Cold death seems calling in the north wind's sound
But, where the clearing and the woodland meet,
Sprouts the green wonder of the winter wheat.

RENEWAL

November is the time for rest. Now earth,
From summer's labor freed, of summer's beauty shorn,
In this gray haven musters her spent strength
To run the gauntlet of the winter storms.

Una W. Harsen

THE FLEMISH POET KAREL VAN DE WOESTIJNE

By CLARK STILLMAN

The outer facts of the life of Karel van de Woestijne are few and simple. He was born in 1878 in Ghent. To his family's business of dealing in copper articles he felt no attraction and preferred to devote himself to study and writing. He practised the profession of journalism during almost his entire career, serving as Belgian correspondent and literary critic for one of the large Dutch newspapers; and in his later years he was professor of literature in the University of Ghent. After a long struggle with tuberculosis he died at his home near Ghent in 1929 at the age of fifty-one.

The outer life was simple. The inner life was complex and intense. No poet was more deeply personal, more intense in his inner life, not the earlier Baudelaire of France, not the ultra-refined and super-sensitive contemporaries of van de Woestijne: Rilke of Germany, Babits of Hungary, and Brezina of Czecho-Slovakia. Van de Woestijne stands with these poets both in his greatness as a writer and in the type of his poetry. It is poetry that will be marked down as representative of the first decades of the twentieth century in Europe, as the rich expression of a society and culture that were to pass into the fires of war and revolution, not to emerge the same. It is not likely that poetry of this mood will flourish so luxuriantly again for many decades to come.

"Mood" is an inadequate word to characterize this European poetry to which van de Woestijne belongs, but it is perhaps no more accurate or enlightening to describe it as the work of symbolists, post-symbolists and modern mystics. In any case, however it may be classified, the poetry of van de Woestijne's first book, *Het Vader-Huis* (*My Father's House*) which appeared in 1903, had a richness of tone and mood that was new to Flemish literature and that assured it a high place in this European "poetry of mood." An idea of this quality can perhaps most clearly be obtained, among the poems here presented, from those beginning: "O father, you who died in pain as evening neared . . . ", "How sad the

rain is in the weary fall . . . ", and "Again the late last light of asters blooms . . . ".

The best of Karel van de Woestijne's work has an intensity that lifts it above any period or particular intellectual environment. He and the nineteenth century poet, Guido Gezelle, are the two great figures of modern Flemish poetry.

From HET BERG - MEER

Oh, the girls from out the taverns,
Their lap is a luscious bed.
They see the lads there gladly,
They bear their children dead.

The silk that they wear is fiery,
The bodice is strained and wet.
At their side we stir and awaken
With the wooden mouth of regret.

The round, round sea where we wander,
That beckons and yawns all our life,
It makes us howl with our longing
And widows our distant wife.

We anchor then in the taverns,
Where rest is a sort of strife.
There redly wait the wenches.
It is there that we shake off life.

From DE BOOM - GAARD
DER VOGELEN EN DER VRUCHTEN

Flanders, O house of plenty, where we sit as friends
at tables heaped with food! — now waving fields
of summer grain stretch out their breathing yields
far towards the crimson east where dawn ascends
while morning wakes in Flanders and the sky:—
Oh, who can know you and not feel his heart leap high? —
not speak his thanks for days so gloriously spread,
the thanks a beggar gives for warm wheat bread? . . .

O Flanders, gay with present-bearing hands
and as you go in gold and purple dress
bestowing fruit, all heavy with your fruitfulness;
— Flanders, who knows you and the dawn's caress
and feels no love flare through him where he stands,
like this warm morning through the fertile Flanders lands!

From DE MODDEREN MAN

Again the late last light of asters blooms,
Again a fall draws near. And this sore heart
When summer's smoking torch sinks into gloom
Once more is torn apart.

I in whose hand the ripe fruit seemed to be
A bliss denied, no taste of it my own,
Who, knowing you, O autumn sympathy,
Feel all the more alone —

Eternal mower, I, who cut the grain
But never bound the sheaves nor owned a part,
Unending sailor on this furrowed main
Who never came to port —

Again a fall draws near, again denying
This heart that, hopeless, still feels longing's sting,
That, always hankering for this autumn dying,
Past winter knows a spring —

Again my blood burns in its autumn mood,
Again my heart grieves in its battered rooms —
How bronze the gold grows in the chestnut wood!
The silver aster blooms . . .

From GOD AAN ZEE

There hangs with measured tamp across the sea
A dull, sad bell. The mist is white as wax,
The day has neither light nor clarity —
And he whose heart's his own knows what he lacks.

A voice resounds, and every one walks lost.
I walk alone and know that here again
Are thousands like me carrying through the mist,
Like pans of milk filled all too full, their pain.

Do not go back, you would not find the turning.
One same complaint, tomorrow, yesterday . . .
The mist-bell fills, invisible and warning,
The white night of day.

From HET VADER-HUIS

Now you are better, peaceful and inviolate,
and like a threshold freshly painted somber gray.
And though your eyes are sad, they had their words to say:
from your love tree I broke the thorns away . . .

— Now this is best, to rest in my calm arms.
Now can a new spring bloom upon your grace . . .
And should you still, recalling, kiss my face:
you kiss a lovely corpse, the son of our embrace.

From DE GULDEN SCHADUW

You said then: "Master"; slipped away . . .
And shuddering, awaking,
from the old pain, in the old way,
I felt new sighs were breaking.

And creeping rain was like a song
of endless slow dejection
that wrapped in distance thick and long
the dawnless east's direction.

And in the house, where tired and flat
all life with tears was welling,
it seemed to me who loitered that
the fruit was riper smelling . . .

— Who are you who, in bitter play
that killed my dream the faster,
on such a day have gone away,
O you who called me "Master"?

From HET VADER-HUIS

I'm lonely — sad in sallow evening light . . .

The window's open, and I hear the fall
of clammy petals by the garden wall . . .

— And cannot tell yet whether I shall love
her in the graceful movement of her limbs
and in her goodness in my strangest self . . .

I feel so sad, and hear her footsteps, slow,
and her soft humming, in the yard below.

From DE GULDEN SCHADUW

Now come to your shore's endless gleaming;
disposed to your passion's wild sway;
with the fondest hopes of our dreaming
and the pride of our deep dismay;

and eager for comforts that ease,
and thankful for troubles that test:
we look to the gold of your east,
we look to the black of your west.

And under our dress of illusion
life tearing our breast apart,
on our lips the salt tears of confusion,
but your salt like a food in the heart;

Sea, holder of fragile wave-patterns
and mighty with winds that are wild,
stretched out the most shameless of slatterns
and bare like an innocent child;

O Sea, that on slow-dawning morns
lies waiting the day from the night,
in your lap the oncoming storms
and your face cold-pale in the light;

behold, we are come to your gleaming,
afraid of eternity's sway,
with the fondest hopes of our dreaming
and the pride of our deep dismay . . .

From HET VADER-HUIS

Your face chants memories, child, your face so white,
and sweet the story of our days together
that like green gardens lay in quiet weather
all bathed in tenderness of evening light,
while round the garden, garment-like, the sky
wraps tranquil shade, and trees still hold the faint
last bird-voice raised in glimmering complaint
that sinks, then swells, and then begins to die . . .

Now, child, no song lives round us, and there seem
like quiet gardens no peace-days at all;
no twilight weaves about our mingling dream,
and round our parted limbs sad shadows fall . . .

And nights I see, last comfort before sleeping,
the silence of your sad white face in weary weeping.

From HET VADER-HUIS

How sad the rain is in the weary fall,
so sadly raining in the autumn lane.
— And oh how heavy hang the flowers in fall;
— and steady rain still streaming down the pane . . .

Sway-still stand gray trees in the gray out there,
the good, soft-sighing trees that weep alone;
— and 'tis the wind, and 'tis a helpless air
of moan-song moaning in a dying tone . . .

— Now I should hear the good old shuffling tread;
now I should see the old peace-picture bright,
my good, gray comfort-mother round the bed
where fever dreams itself a flaming light,
and grief bursts out in tears that burn like gall . . .

— How sad my sadness should dispel all ease
and languish in the drabness of the trees;
— how sad the rain is in the weary fall.

From HET VADER-HUIS

O father, you who died in pain as evening neared,
who gave me life and taught me tenderly to live,
with your soft voice and trembling hands so glad to give,
and when you died the late sun glinting on your beard;

I who am now as one drifts in eventide,
and laxly leaves the oars at rest there, driven only
by summer breezes in the low reefs wandering lonely,
who sometimes plucks the water-lilies at his side,

and sings sometimes, indifferent; and his singing billows
wide-sighing o'er the languid water, and the willows
as if to their own sighing listen to his song . . .

So drifts in peace and dream my life death longs to take,
till lingering, in the mirror of a deeper lake
my face beholds your face, and bends there looking long.

FRUSTRATION

By Kingsley Tufts

We planted it together, you and I,
And prayed in our hearts that it would live.
The loneliest hour of all my life, I think,
Was when it bloomed
And there was no one I could tell.

HANDS

By WARREN CARYL

Four hands across the table,
Two men and between them, the Earth,
Its seas and skies.

Hands lying on the table;
Wrinkles like carved lines
Running in uneven roads across firm flesh.

The fine engraving in palm and fingertips,
Clear cut, distinct as etched lines
Gleaming under bright electric lights.

Four hands in Relief, on the tabletop
And above them;
Two men, their bodies dissolving
Into room-shadows.

Hands breaking the Earth as they broke
Their daily bread . . .
These hands lying on the table,
Built the Earth.

The knuckles are rough and hard;
Black dirt clings in opaque rings
Beneath translucent finger-nails.

They move, rasping on the tabletop,
Clenching tightly . . .
Then open and lie flat.

Four hands, they held the Earth,
And moved its soil.

Fingers and the jointed bones,
Piling the bricks and stones;
Forcing steel girders into bridges and skyscrapers.

Hands, that hung power lines to the sky;
Molded the cement of dams;
Laid into almost unconquerable distances
The paths of automobiles and trains.

Hands that made love
In easy rippling movements.

Hands lifting to vacuum mouths
Deep glasses of wine.

Hands that built a way through the sky,
Then flew it . . .

Hands working, and damp soil
Becoming part of them.

Hands holding, lifting, grasping,
And the tendons pulling
Each finger to its commanded task.

Hands weary of World lifting;
Hands weary of ache and throb and dirt.

Then write, paint, conceive . . .
Build their dream in more slender outlines,
With more transparent and hidden foundations.

Hands . . . slender hands, awkward hands,
Rough hands.

Hands on the tabletop;
Quiet hands, quick hands, slow hands.

Hands that live, and the veins
Run in bluish streaks, against a reddish
Depth of blood and substance.

Hands and the shadows fall
Into concave shallows.

Hands holding worn creases of life,
Forever holding the Earth to the sky.

Beautiful hands, working like
Throbbing angular machines . . .
Holding a shovel, or a paint-brush . . .
Building things to last for years.

Hands to conceive, hands to slave,
Hands to blend life into the soil.

Ponderous these hands . . .
And each hair of the flesh
Stands glowing in white glare of electric lights.

Four hands sleeping on the tabletop,
And they have a right to sleep.

CHAPEL BELLS AT EVENTIDE

Chapel bells at eventide,
Tunefully they ring,
Out across the countryside:
Dingle-dong, ding-ding,
Far against the mountainside,
Back and echoing:
Dingle, dingle, dingle, dingle
Dingle-dong, ding-ding!

Chapel bells at eventide,
Pealing down the dell,
Clear as twilight twinkling stars,
Solemn as a knell,
Dingle, dingle, dingle, dingle,
Merrily they ring,
Over all the countryside,
Dingle, dong, ding-ding!

Carl Marton

TWO POEMS

By Sister M. Angeline, S. S. N. D.

STRICKEN DEER

She was so lithe, fleet-footed, beauty-crowned.
Had she not died today
She would have fallen tomorrow
Held at bay.

She walked on flowers — past the jagged thorn,
The thistle-wort. In summer rains
She flashed through wildwood lanes
Away . . .

You saw her sometimes roaming in the night
On darksome ledge,
Till in the morning light
She drew a silver silhouette
On swift Dawn's edge.

Mourn her, you who loved her,
On her friendly hills.
The stinging arrow in her side
Her bright blood spills.

ANNE HATHAWAY'S DIARY

All in the merry month of June
ye loved me, lad;
a moon slenderly curled,
(with fairies dangling down into our world —
Titania and Oberon and Puck)
lighted our vagrant feet;
ye brought me home
the heartease herb — for luck . . .

I needed it — but not for luck — for love . . .

Ye went to London-town,
and loved me, lad;
Heigh-ho!
A cottage of roses in the down
and the Stratford air . . .
But Mary Fytton's hair
was gold,
whatever the Sonnets say —
and Anne — Anne Hathaway
was old!

The heartease turned to rue . . .
And Gossip came to Stratford town
for no good, lad;
a snake
coiled in the grass
where a child might pass —
Susanna, Hamnet, or Judith wise,
with her father's eyes . . .

My Love was dead — that was what they said!

My Love was dead? . . .
They were lying, lad.
Today
the lights of London
are far away
and you're here again!
Thin air the cloud-capped towers
and the king's estate,
for Ariel's song is in Stratford lane
and Prospero's hand is on my gate . . .

Oh! — There's many a woman of gentler fame
as the years go by
might wish she were I . . .
I bear Will Shakespeare's name!

RELEASED

By MARY WILLIS SHELBURNE

No grave could hold you;
You are restrained by
No quiet earth.

Long since they have blown out the candles,
Swept up the last petals of flowers
And put up the shades.
All the sprays and wreaths
Are faded;
What do you care,
You, who were never there?

You had longed to wander in far places;
Saigon, Delhi — magic names
Lured you, but children held you,
And the man you loved so richly once
Kept tight the traces.
So you never saw one enchanted city rise,
Not Venice, nor on the Thames,
Old London Town.
Only in your dreams rose minarets and towers.
All your days were weary repetitions of each other,
Monotonies in brown.

But when they said, "She is gone,"
You *were* gone. Swiftly flying
Like a thought, you cut the blue
Universe of space.
No grave could hold you;
Your body was your grave.
They said you died,
But they were wrong, —
Now you are alive.

INTERDEPENDENCE

By Francis Merchant

A word,
Softly spoken,
And the night became light.

A sigh
Scarcely broken,
And suddenly — sight.

A thought,
Hardly uttered,
And the universe changed.

A curse,
Hardly muttered,
And a mind was deranged.

Sweet love
Unexpressed,
And a heart was healed.

A deed
Of largesse,
And light was revealed.

WILD WIND

By Donna Lois Gideon

Oh, wild wind,
Oh, cold wind,
    You led me on and on.
Oh, gay wind,
Oh, bold wind,
    With you, my soul is not my own.
You are my interpreter.
You tell me of forest glades
    And flowing fountains;
And yet you led me on and on.
You never tell the secret
    That is your own.

A WOMAN'S WAY

By Marion Dorothy Hermes

Where he had been there crept an ugly scar
Along the flesh of life; a thing of red
And sometimes white, as though his being far
Away could never make his moods quite dead
To her. She kept her eyes and hands inclined
To other things and held the wound concealed.

She was as tender and as gently kind
As she had been to him; and as it healed
It seemed to some she loved the hurt as much
As she had loved the man who put it there.
For when it paled beyond her sight and touch
She only then began to cry and stare.

AUTUMN FIRE

By Edythe Hope Genee

The sumac bushes flame with living fires
Against the dusky veil of autumn sky,
And maples fling their crimson banners down,
In challenge to the sultry, dreaming spires
Of goldenrod. Fiery blankets lie
On smoke-bush, sage, and meadows' brown;
A timid quail approaches burning pyres
Of bittersweet; a homing butterfly
Designs slow patterns on a glowing crown
Of rose-red haw.

While through the flaming trees one can espy
The scarlet red of roof-tops in the town!

POEM

By John Henrik Clarke

I'll tell you what nature says
When she whispers in my ear each day;
'Tis woven in each song she sings . . .
"Man, compared with me,
Is an insignificant thing."

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